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# **The Creation of “Ancient” Scottish Music History, 1720-1838**

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the writing of Scottish music history from the 1720s to 1838. It concludes that the Scottish music histories written over this period were fundamentally shaped by the interaction of ideas about universal historical progress with ideas specific to the Scottish context of the work. Ramsay's pioneering claims that Scots songs were ancient were supported by parallels between the features of song – simplicity, pastorality and naturalness - and ideas about the nature of the past held more widely. The contrasts he drew with Italian music and English verse further supported his claims in ways specific to the Scottish context. In the later eighteenth century the Enlightenment model of universal historical progress – simple and pastoral societies developed into complex and commercial ones over time - came to underpin the continued perception that Scots songs were ancient. This same universal model underpinned narratives of scalar development, and narratives of preservation. Contemporary perceptions of the place of the Scottish Highlands and rural societies in the universal model of historical progress resulted in the collection of more purportedly historic song from Highlanders and the rural poor of the Lowlands and Borders. These same perceptions also seem to have resulted in the differing use of written sources to create a picture of a gradually evolving Lowland/Border music history and a static Highland music history. Specifically Scottish destructive events were used to explain the lack of other forms of evidence of purportedly ancient songs in the past: the Reformation, defeudalisation, and the modernisation of the countryside form turning points in many of the narratives. Writers' reasons for writing Scottish music history similarly reveal twin concerns with the universal and the particularly Scottish.

In foregrounding the social and cultural factors which underpinned the construction of Scottish music history in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, this study challenges the continued inclusion of elements of the present-day received view. In addition, in demonstrating the parallels between music-historical and historical writings more broadly this thesis enriches our understanding of Enlightenment historical thought.

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## Preface

Early Scottish music history is a subject of much interest to the public at large. Discoveries of new sources in recent years, such as the markings around the border of one of the sixteenth-century “Stirling heads”, have received attention in the news.<sup>1</sup> In 2007 BBC Scotland broadcast a fifty-two part series on Scottish music history entitled ‘Scotland’s Music: A Radio History’, and a six-part television series ‘Scotland’s Music with Phil Cunningham’ which included historical elements.

Those members of the public who were interested in finding out more about the Scottish musical past have the choice of a range of general interest books on the subject: Henry George Farmer’s 1947 *A History of Music in Scotland*; Francis Collinson’s 1966 *The Traditional and National Music of Scotland*; Kenneth Elliott and Frederick Rimmer’s 1973 *A History of Scottish Music*; Cedric Thorpe Davie’s 1980 *Scotland’s Music*; and John Purser’s 1992 and 2007 *Scotland’s Music*, the book accompanying ‘Scotland’s Music: A Radio History’, all cater to the general reader.

For such readers the books listed above have many advantages: all of them are relatively brief, given the large time scale they cover. This is particularly notable in the case of Elliott and Rimmer’s *History* which covers the period from 1250 to 1970 in a book only eighty-four pages long. The writing of some can now appear dated, but still tends to be clear, concise and not overburdened with specialist terminology. In part this may be attributable to the genesis of Elliott and Rimmer’s and Purser’s books as radio series. Purser’s text is presented in the visually attractive, large-scale glossy format of a “coffee table book”.

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<sup>1</sup> See report on the BBC website on 27<sup>th</sup> August 2009 “Early music discovered on carving: Markings on a 16th Century carving from Stirling Castle could be the oldest surviving piece of written Scottish instrumental music, historians believe” (BBC 2009, *Early Music Discovered on Carving*). Another example comes from the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2007 “Team cracks chapel’s music ‘code’” regarding an arrangement of blocks on the ceiling of Rosslyn Chapel, although it is possible that this report received attention more for the connection between the chapel and the popular novel by Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*, than for its music-historical content (BBC 2007, *Team Cracks Chapel’s Music ‘Code’*).

Unsurprisingly those approaching the early music of Scotland from a scholarly angle might find these books extremely frustrating: there is little referencing of sources and little of the overt weighing of evidence we expect from scholarly work. Luckily, some aspects of the early music history of Scotland have been studied by scholars: examples include music in the church which has been studied by Isobel Woods Preece, and aspects of the music of the Picts which have been written about by Isabel Henderson and James Porter. Moving into the sixteenth century and the Reformation, the Wode Psalter has recently been the subject of a three-year Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded project at the University of Edinburgh.<sup>2</sup> Yet in terms of the overall picture of the early music history of Scotland, the received view is still largely represented by the general books given above.

Music historians are faced with a problem in that there are relatively few primary source materials for the early music history of Scotland. The present-day received view strings these scant sources together into a narrative which rests on many unquestioned assumptions about the nature of the past, and draws on secondary literature dating back to the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

This study examines how Scottish music history was written in these eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century publications. Published writings on the historical nature of Scottish music began to appear in 1720s, opening a period of much discussion between writers, culminating in William Dauney's 1838 *Ancient Scottish Melodies*, a work which shows recognisable parallels with the present-day received view. This study will show how the writing of Scottish music history was part and parcel of broader historical thought. It will be argued that the shape of Scottish music history was a consequence of perceptions of universal human history and of perceptions of uniquely Scottish historical events. The relevance of this study is predicated on the parallels between eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century perceptions of the Scottish musical past and the present-day received view.

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<sup>2</sup> Woods Preece 2000, *Music in the Scottish Church up to 1603*; Henderson 1986, *The 'David Cycle'*; Porter 1983, *Harps, Pipes and Silent Stones*; the Wode Psalter project website can be viewed at <http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/divinity/research/projects/wode-psalter>.

Although this study covers the period from the 1720s to 1838, some publications of a later date have been considered when there is evidence that they were written prior to 1838. This notably applies to William Stenhouse's *Illustrations of the Lyric Poetry and Music of Scotland*, sections of which first went into print in late 1820, but, owing to a delay in writing the preface to the work, remained in the printer's warehouse until they were published posthumously with a new preface by David Laing in 1853.<sup>3</sup>

The study focusses on ideas which were in the public domain by virtue of being published. Its primary focus is ideas about Scottish music history that were current in Scotland itself. It focusses on writings which can be shown to have been read and discussed in Scotland. For this reason most of the publications consulted were published in Scotland. A number of authors and publishers, however, moved from Scotland to London, and their publications are considered where there is evidence that their publications were part of the intellectual milieu of those publishing in Scotland itself. In general, such evidence is the citing of such publications by publications published in Scotland. A good example of this is William Thomson's *Orpheus Caledonius* which was published in London but widely cited in later publications on Scottish music history produced in Scotland.<sup>4</sup> A further example is provided by Richard Hartley Cromeck's 1810 *Remains of Nithsdale and Galloway Song*. Cromeck was English and his collection was published in London, but he was a corresponding member of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and his publication was read and discussed in Scotland.<sup>5</sup> The key sources used can be seen in Table 1.

This study is split into two sections: the first section examines the writing of Scottish music history chronologically (chapters 2 and 3); the second examines key themes over the whole chronological span (chapters 4 to 7).

Chapter 1 begins with an examination of some of the problems with the received view of Scottish music history, as exemplified by Henry George Farmer's 1947 *A History of Music*

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<sup>3</sup> Stenhouse and Laing 1853, *Illustrations*, xviii.

<sup>4</sup> *Orpheus Caledonius* is cited, for example, in Herd 1769, *Ancient and Modern Scots Songs*, Runcole [John Ramsay of Ochtertyre] 1791, *On Scottish Songs*, and Thomson 1822, *Select Melodies of Scotland*.

<sup>5</sup> Read 2004, Cromeck, paragraph 2. See comments on the *Remains* made by Alexander Fraser Tytler, Walter Scott and James Hogg, amongst others cited in Read 2011, *R. H. Cromeck*, 134-136.

*in Scotland*. Farmer's parallels with William Dauney's 1838 *Ancient Scottish Melodies* will be outlined. The case for presenting Dauney as the latest writer in a self-conscious historiographical "school" of writers on Scottish music history will be stated. In light of these arguments it will be argued that an examination of the writing of Scottish music history in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries has relevance to our current understanding of the musical past.

Chapter 2 presents a chronological account of the writing of Scottish music history over the period 1720-1838. The first person to claim that Scottish songs were "old", although exactly how old was not specified, in print was Allan Ramsay in his 1723 collection of songs *The Tea-Table Miscellany*. He later similarly claimed that Scots tunes were "ancient". In the period immediately following Ramsay, writers who mentioned the historic nature of Scottish music confined their statements to the reiteration of the idea that songs like those published by Ramsay were ancient, and the attribution of some songs to David Rizzio, gentleman of the privy chamber to Mary Queen of Scots. The level of interest in and the range of aspects covered by writers expanded dramatically from the late 1760s, although the focus on the type of song which had appeared in *The Tea-Table Miscellany*, and which was widely sung at the time, remained. A number of key themes emerge from the 1760s onwards: who composed and/or performed music in the past; the instruments used; scale types of historic music; collection from oral sources; and Highland music. These strands were drawn together in William Dauney's 1838 *Ancient Scottish Melodies*.

The subsequent chapters take a more thematic approach, tracing ideas over the chronological span of the study. Chapter 3 focusses on Allan Ramsay's statements in the 1720s that songs were "old" and tunes were "ancient". The melodies in question had been used in the seventeenth century for instrumental recreation and pedagogy but no sense that they were historic material appears in the surviving manuscript sources, Ramsay therefore occupies a key place in the writing of Scottish music history. In addition to characterising songs as "old" and their tunes as "ancient", Ramsay drew out some of their features: their simplicity, pastorality, naturalness, the ease with which they could

be learned by the unlearned, and their difference to contemporary Italian music. The parallels between Ramsay's description of ancient song and contemporary writings about the historic nature of simple and natural pastoral poetry show that the features of ancient song that Ramsay highlighted reflected a more widespread set of ideas about the nature of the past in general. In Ramsay's presentation of ancient song, however, these ideas about pastoral poetry – which were discussed on a European level, and not simply confined to Scottish poetry – work in tandem with ideas about the past and present specific to the Scottish context. Ramsay compares ancient Scots tunes to Italian music, widely seen in Scotland as the most modern and refined music of the day. The language of the texts which Ramsay labels as "old" and the new texts in the *Miscellany* differs in the density of the Scots used, those labelled as "old" having a much greater density of Scots elements than the new texts. Like the contrast Ramsay draws with Italian music, the contrast set up by the differences in language of the different texts suggests the impact of contemporary perceptions of the past specific to the Scottish context of Ramsay's work: Scots was perceived to be an old language, both in terms of being a language that was being replaced by newer, more Anglicised speech, and in terms of being perceived to be more faithful to medieval language than modern, corrupt English. Ramsay's claim that some songs were "old" and tunes were "ancient" was reinforced by his presentation of the material in the *Miscellany* which tapped into contemporary perceptions about the nature of the past in general, twinned with perceptions about the past specific to the Scottish context. The interaction of such ideas about the universal past with ideas about the specifically Scottish past in the writing of Scottish music history will be seen throughout the period in question.

Chapter 4 examines the role of the Enlightenment model of universal historical progress in the shaping of Scottish music history from the second half of the eighteenth century. The songs published by Ramsay in *The Tea-Table Miscellany* continued to be seen as ancient songs, despite criticism of Ramsay's work by later writers. Writers were not, then, simply slavishly following Ramsay in continuing to see songs as ancient, rather their perception that songs were ancient was underpinned by the parallels between the features seen as characteristic of song and the features seen as characteristic of early

forms of society in the prevailing model of historical progress. The same model of universal historical progress also underpinned the addition of more songs collected from the Highlands and the rural poor of the Lowlands and Borders to the corpus of ancient song, and the creation of a narrative of the development of scale types over time. In addition, accounting for apparent disparities between Scots songs and the demands of the historical model led to the creation of historical narratives of corruption over time and parallel traditions of preservation.

Chapter 5 examines the interaction of the universal model of historical progress with ideas specific to the Scottish context of the music histories through the lens of the use of sources which were not Scots songs or ballads published by Ramsay or his followers to write the history of those songs and ballads. The majority of such sources are written records from the past or the manuscript or published works of earlier historians, but this is not to imply that the focus of the previous chapter was on oral sources. Close examination of the use of written sources to support the history of Scots song reveals a difference between the treatment of Lowland/Border and Highland music history, suggesting that the shape of music history was affected by perceptions of differences between two societies in early stages of their development. Joseph Ritson rejected the use of oral sources and built a history of song almost entirely on written sources. In the differing uses of written sources for Lowland/Border and Highland music history, and in the work of Ritson and later writers who used the same body of sources, we can see the impact of efforts to fit specifically Scottish historical circumstances into the universal model of historical progress on the writing of Scottish music history.

Chapter 6 examines how ideas about social and cultural change moulded narratives of Scottish music history. Three changes in particular are discussed: defeudalisation, the Reformation and the eighteenth-century modernisation of the countryside. It will be argued that broader perceptions of these events led to their selection as key points around which narratives of Scottish music history were built. In contrast to the previous chapters, which focussed on ideas about the universal nature of early societies, this chapter focusses on specifically Scottish events. Although such changes did take place

elsewhere, the specifically Scottish cases were the subject of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century debate. The perception of the impact of large-scale social changes shows a more local influence acting in tandem with the wider ideas on the writing of Scottish music history.

Chapter 7 examines the reasons for the writing of Scottish music history. Many writings on music history were produced as contributions to the wider disciplines of the Enlightenment such as the history of manners. They reveal a concern with modernity and the potential pitfalls of civilised societies. Other reasons for writing Scottish music history stem from writers' particular Scottish situation: the need to preserve a distinctive musical heritage in the post-Union period; the need to celebrate the survival of Scottish musical culture despite the vicissitudes of past Scottish historical events; and the need to answer contemporary perceptions that their nation was made up of savages. In this aspect, again, then, Scottish music history formed part of the Enlightenment project more broadly, but inflected within the specifically Scottish context.

This study concludes that during the key period of its formation between 1720 and 1838 the writing of Scottish music history was shaped by the interaction of contemporary ideas both about the nature of early societies, which was seen as universal, and the particular effect of the Scottish context in the following ways: Ramsay's claim that songs were "old" and tunes "ancient" was reinforced by the parallels between his characterisation of the defining features of Scots songs and the features more widely seen as characteristic of pastoral poetry. Ramsay's claims were further reinforced by the contrast he drew with Italian music, and the contrast between the densely Scots texts of the "old" songs and the more neo-classically English inspired texts of the new songs.

When Scottish music history became a subject of much writing in the second half of the eighteenth century, the features of song that Ramsay had highlighted allowed it to slot neatly into the early, simple, pastoral stage of the prevailing model of universal historical progress. Yet, in many ways, the body of song inherited from Ramsay sat uneasily within the universal model. In their attempts to accommodate Scots song within the model,

writers drew on ideas specific to the Scottish context and in so doing created a story of Scottish music history which went far beyond simply understanding songs as ancient. The recurring narrative of corruption through refinement over time and the related narrative of parallel traditions of preservation amongst the metropolitan elite and the rural poor allowed songs which were on the surface too complex to ancient to be accommodated within the early stages of the historical model through reference to aspects of the model itself. The process of collecting uncorrupted, and even lost, songs from the rural poor was underpinned by the part of the model which predicted that different societies passed through the universal stages of historical development at different rates. Collectors focussed on the Highlands and the rural poor of the Lowlands and Borders because they were the parts of contemporary Scotland perceived as less developed, even primitive, societies. The perception that writing was a feature of developed historical societies, and that early societies were oral was carefully placed into the Scottish historical context by Joseph Ritson. Ritson's music history thus begins in the thirteenth century, the point at which Ritson considers that the specifically Scottish historical circumstances had resulted in the development of a literate society. In the later work of Motherwell and Dauney, the same written sources are placed into the universal model of historical progress in a different way, the music history of the literate ancestors of the metropolitan elite drawn from written sources running in parallel to the oral music history of the illiterate ancestors of the contemporary rural poor.

Perceptions of the defining characteristics of Scots songs allowed them to be accommodated within the early stages of the model of universal historical development and thus be considered "ancient", but there was very little evidence of such songs from the past. There was, however, some evidence that Scottish musical life had been different in the past, featuring bards and minstrels, for example. The lack of evidence of songs in the past presented a potential challenge to the antiquity of the songs. The evidence which suggested that bards and minstrels had existed similarly presented a challenge to music historians, since the perception that ancient song was preserved amongst the eighteenth century rural poor relied on the idea, drawn from the universal model of historical progress, that their society had remained unchanged since the song

was composed. These challenges were addressed by reference to specifically Scottish destructive events: the decline of feudalism, the Reformation and the turbulent seventeenth century, and the eighteenth-century modernisation of the countryside. In consequence, these events assumed a pivotal role in the music histories of some writers.

From the late eighteenth century onwards, writers on Scottish music history present themselves as participants in a field of study which began with Ramsay. Many of the ideas which became part of music history, however, were first expressed in writings which were not about Scottish music history *per se*, but rather were contributions to some of the foremost disciplines of the international Enlightenment movement: philosophy and the history of manners amongst them. At the same time, Scottish music historians sought to answer a number of specifically Scottish concerns: the potential threat to Scottish culture posed by the Union of 1707; the integrity of Scottish culture despite the threats of the past; and perceptions of Scotland as a nation of savages. The very reasons for writing Scottish music history, then, show the interaction of ideas at the forefront of international Enlightenment thought with ideas about the specifically Scottish past and the place of Scotland within the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century world.

**Table 1 – Key sources used in this study.**

**Allan Ramsay:**

1724 *The Tea-table Miscellany* (Edinburgh: Mr. Thomas Ruddiman, for Allan Ramsay)

1729. *The Tea-Table Miscellany: Or, A Complete Collection of Scots Sangs* (Dublin: Printed for E. Smith)

**Benjamin Franklin:**

1765. ‘To Lord Kames’ in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin* (The Packard Humanities Institute) pp. 158-164.

No author. 1781. ‘Music’ in *Encyclopædia Britannica; Or, A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, &c... The Second Edition...* (Edinburgh: Printed for J. Balfour and Co. W. Gordon, J. Bell, J. Dickson, C. Elliot, W. Creech, J. Mccliesh, A. Bell, J. Hutton, and C. Macfarquhar)

**David Herd:**

1769. *The Ancient and Modern Scots Songs, Heroic Ballads, &c. Now first Collected into one Body, from the Various Miscellanies Wherin they Formerly lay Dispersed. Containing Likewise, A great Number of Original Songs, from Manuscripts, never before published* (Edinburgh: Printed by and for Martin and Wotherspoon)

1776. *Ancient and Modern Scottish Songs, Heroic Ballads, etc. In two volumes. ...* (Edinburgh: Printed by John Wotherspoon. For James Dickson and Charles Elliot)

**Henry Home, Lord Kames:**

1774. *Sketches of the History of Man. In Two Volumes* (Edinburgh: Printed for W. Creech, Edinburgh; and for W. Strahan, and T. Cadell, London)

**James Beattie:**

1776. 'Remarks on Music' in *Essays: On Poetry and Music, as they Affect the Mind; On Laughter, and Ludicrous Composition; On the Usefulness of Classical Learning* (Edinburgh: William Creech)

**Sir John Hawkins:**

1769-1776. *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music* (London: printed for T. Payne and Son, at the Mews-Gate)

**Dr. Charles Burney:**

1776-1789. *A General History of Music, from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period. To which is Prefixed, A Dissertation on the Music of the Ancients* (London: Printed for the author: and sold by T. Becket; J. Robson; and G. Robinson)

**William Tytler:**

1779. 'A Dissertation on the Scottish Musick' in *The History of Edinburgh*, edited by H. Arnot (Edinburgh: Printed for W. Creech; Edinburgh: and J. Murray, London) pp. 624-642.

1783. 'A Dissertation on the Scottish Music' in *Poetical Remains of James the First, King of Scotland* (Edinburgh: J. and E. Balfour) pp. 195-246.

**John Pinkerton:**

1781. *Scottish Tragic Ballads* (London: Printed by and for J. Nichols)

1783. *Select Scotish Ballads, Volume 2: Containing Ballads of the Comic Kind* (London: J. Nichols)

1786. *Ancient Scottish Poems, Never Before in Print. But Now Published from the MS. Collections of Sir Richard Maitland, Of Lethington, Knight, Lord Privy Seal Of Scotland, And*

*A Senator Of The College Of Justice. Comprising pieces written from about 1420 till 1586. With large notes, and a glossary. Prefixed are An essay on the origin of Scotish poetry. A list of all the Scotish poets, With Brief Remarks. And an appendix is added, containing, Among Other Articles, an account of the contents of the Maitland and Bannatyne MSS* (London and Edinburgh: Printed for Charles Dilly; and for William Creech at Edinburgh)

**Joseph Ritson:**

1794. *Scotish Songs* (London: Printed for J. Johnson, in St. Pauls Churchyard; and J. Egerton, Whitehall)

**Patrick McDonald:**

1784. *A Collection of Highland Vocal Airs, Never hitherto published. To which are added a few of the most lively Country Dances or Reels, of the North Highlands, and Western Isles: And some Specimens of Bagpipe Music.* By Patrick McDonald Minister of Kilmore in Argyllshire (Edinburgh: Corri and Sutherland)

**John Ramsay of Ochtertyre:**

1791. ‘To the Editor of the Bee. On Scottish Songs’ in *The Bee, or Literary Weekly Intelligencer* ii: 201-210<sup>6</sup>

1784. ‘Of the Influence of Poetry and Music upon the Highlanders’ in McDonald, P. *A Collection of Highland Vocal Airs, Never hitherto published. To which are added a few of the most lively Country Dances or Reels, of the North Highlands, and Western Isles: And some Specimens of Bagpipe Music.* By Patrick McDonald Minister of Kilmore in Argyllshire (Edinburgh: Corri and Sutherland) pp. 8-15.<sup>7</sup>

**Alexander Campbell:**

1798. *An Introduction to the History of Poetry in Scotland, from the Beginning of the Thirteenth Century down to the Present Time: Together with A Conversation on Scotish Song, By Alexander Campbell, Author of Odes and Miscellaneous Poems, &c. To which are subjoined, Sangs of the Lowlands of Scotland...* (Edinburgh: Sold by Andrew Foulis)

1816 and 1818. *Albyn's Anthology or a Select Collection of the Melodies and Vocal Poetry peculiar to Scotland and the Isles hitherto unpublished Collected and Arranged by Alexander Campbell Author of the History of Poetry in Scotland, a Journey through the different parts of Scotland &c. &c. The modern Scotish and English verses adapted to the Highland, Hebridean & Lowland Melodies written by Walter Scott Esq. and other living Poets of the first Eminence* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd)

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<sup>6</sup> Published pseudonymously under the name “J. Runcole”.

<sup>7</sup> This essay appears anonymously, McAulay, however, makes a convincing case for seeing it as the work of Ramsay of Ochtertyre, see McAulay 2009, *Our Ancient National Airs*, 35.

**John Leyden:**

1801. 'Preliminary Dissertation' in *The Complaynt of Scotland. Written in 1548. With A Preliminary Dissertation, and Glossary* (Edinburgh: Printed for Archibald Constable)

**George Thomson:**

1822. *Select Melodies of Scotland, Interspersed with those of Ireland and Wales, United to the Songs of Robt. Burns, Sir Walter Scott Bart. and other Distinguished Poets: With Symphonies and Accompaniments for the Piano Forte by Pleyel, Kozeluch, Haydn and Beethoven* (London: Printed and sold by Preston, 71 Dean Street, and G. Thomson)

**Sir Walter Scott:**

1802. *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border: Consisting of Historical and Romantic Ballads, Collected in the Southern Counties of Scotland; With a Few of Modern Date, Founded upon Local Tradition. In Two Volumes* (Kelso: Printed by James Ballantyne, for T. Cadell Jun. and W. Davies, Strand, London)

**Richard Hartley Cromeek:**

1810. *Remains of Nithsdale and Galloway Song: with Historical and Traditional Notices Relative to the Manners and Customs of the Peasantry* (London: Printed for T. Cadell and W. Davies, Strand by T. Bensley)

**William Motherwell:**

1827. *Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern* (Glasgow: John Wylie)

**William F. Skene:**

1837. *The Highlanders of Scotland* (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street)

**William Dauney:**

1838. *Ancient Scotish Melodies, from a Manuscript of the Reign of King James VI with an Introductory Enquiry Illustrative of the History of the Music of Scotland* (Edinburgh: The Edinburgh Printing and Publishing Company)

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. The Problem with Farmer

Amongst the present-day literature on Scottish music history Henry George Farmer's 1947 *A History of Music in Scotland* is a key text: Davie, Elliott and Rimmer, and Purser all cite Farmer in their bibliographies. Farmer even makes an appearance in James Porter's more scholarly article on the music of the Picts.<sup>1</sup> The continued importance of Farmer's work is a problem for a number of reasons: firstly, Farmer's work is now over sixty years old and some elements of his story have been challenged by more recent work. An example is provided by Farmer's treatment of the thirteenth-century Scottish music theorist Simon Tailler. Tailler appears in Farmer's story as a reformer of church music, single-handedly improving church music until Scotland could contend with Rome in terms of musical quality.<sup>2</sup> Recent work by Geoffrey Chew, however, questions whether Tailler and his treatises ever existed. Tailler first appears in Thomas Dempster's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis scotorum* in 1627, in which Dempster gives as his source a *Historia* written by the early sixteenth-century bishop of Dunblane, George Newtoun. Chew questions the existence of such a *Historia*. Chew also questions the reliability of Dempster as a historian, characterising Dempster as "a patriotic controversialist anxious to recreate a glorious past for the Catholic Church in Scotland, and to represent the 'Haeretici' of the reformed Church as responsible for the wholesale destruction of ancient learning", leading him to invent historical characters.<sup>3</sup>

The second problem with the continued importance of Farmer's work is that his lack of overt weighing of evidence leads him to present sources created at one point as evidence for music at a far removed time. He uses the *Vita Kentigerni*, for example, to show that

<sup>1</sup> Thorpe Davie 1980, *Scotland's Music*, 55; Elliott and Rimmer 1973, *History of Scottish Music*; Purser 2007, *Scotland's Music*, 375; Porter 1983, *Harps, Pipes and Silent Stones*, 264.

<sup>2</sup> Farmer 1947, *History*, 58. Elliott and Rimmer add to this story, positing a link between Tailler and the composition of some of the pieces in the manuscript Wolfenbüttel 677, associated with St. Andrews (Elliott and Rimmer 1973, *History of Scottish Music*, 8-9). Woods Preece also picks up the story, suggesting that if Tailler had been the compiler of W1 this would explain the Dominican influence identified by Roesner in the collection (Woods Preece 2000, *Music in the Scottish Church up to 1603*, 29-30).

<sup>3</sup> Chew 2009, *Tailler*; Chew 2009, *Dempster*.

the instruments used in Strathclyde during the “Celtic period” – prior to 1124 - were the same as those used in Ireland (23). Although there is uncertainty as to the exact year of Kentigern’s death, it appears to have taken place in the early years of the seventh century. The main surviving *Vita Kentigerni*, however, dates from around 1180, and an older fragment is only a few decades earlier.<sup>4</sup> Neither date falls within the “Celtic period” that Farmer uses the *Vita* to illuminate. The delay between the death of the saint and the writing of the *Vita* raises questions as to whether the *Vita Kentigerni* is more likely to have reflected twelfth-century practice, or twelfth-century ideas about what was old, than seventh-century practice. Most problematically, without further investigation of the life of Saint Kentigern and the creation of the *Vita*, Farmer’s lack of discussion means that these problems are completely hidden from the reader.

A related problem is his uncritical use of secondary sources: Farmer accepts ideas such as John Gunn’s that from the mid-sixth century churchmen performed on the harp, even while admitting that “I do not know his authority for this statement” (30). In another instance Farmer accepts Dauney’s speculation that David I must have introduced organs into the church since he did so much for other aspects of the church in Scotland (52). In the cases of the *Vita Kentigerni* and his references to Gunn and Dauney Farmer does at least name his sources. The rest of the book is peppered with assertions for which no source or evidence is given. In some cases the source can be reasonably easily inferred, information about household musicians of the court and their rates of pay suggests the Exchequer Rolls as a first port of call in the search for Farmer’s source. Other cases are not nearly so easily traced.

The final major problem with Farmer’s work is that his sources are strung together into a historical story by a number of underlying yet unquestioned assumptions about the nature of the past. Farmer seems to subscribe to a teleological view of cultural “progress” in which “advances” are made through a series of steps. He portrays Scotland as variously lagging behind and then catching up with cultural advancements, writing of the opening of the fifteenth century, for example, that “Scotland was then only beginning to

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<sup>4</sup> Broun 2004, *Kentigern*.

take her place in the world of culture" (65). Not all groups in society contribute to culture equally in Farmer's account; he describes the period between 1124 and 1424, for example, as that in which "The people at large for the first time became participants in general culture" (47). All of these seem to be underpinned by a conception of culture as a fixed set of valued artistic practices and ideals against which the music of the past could be compared and judged. A further assumption of Farmer's is that trends in other arts could be used to illuminate trends in music during periods for which little musical evidence remains, arguing, for example, that the filigree of the Tara Brooch could be heard in Celtic music (33-34). Farmer draws trends and analogies over long time periods, giving the reader the impression that their understanding of the present or recent past illuminates historical practice, without a full consideration of the nature of the evidence on which this is based. A prime example is his discussion of decoration in his Celtic period: "perhaps a more artistic feature of felic and bardic music was the decoration or ornamentation of the melodic outline which, as those who are conversant with Gaelic music will know, has persisted into quite modern times" (33). Farmer does not pause to question whether his assumption that a melodic line would be decorated is itself based on culturally conditioned notions of what a melodic line is, and whether what he considers as decoration would necessarily be seen as decoration at all times and in all places. Writing of the songs sung by the folk between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries, for example, Farmer notes that little is known of the words of the songs but that their titles suggest that their texts were less modest than those of carols. He supports his argument with the statement that "the people do not change their habits overnight. Even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the indecorum of the Scottish song was still troubling editors" (63). Farmer's final assertion is that "Scottish" music came under attack from outside forces at key points in its history, an idea which appears to be grounded in an essentialised idea of "native" music.<sup>5</sup>

Farmer presents his history as complete and not open to question. He makes bold, unsupported statements about the nature of the past, such as his assertion that the chant

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<sup>5</sup> See for example Farmer 1947, *History*, 80 "because it is just as well that we should understand that in spite of frequent alien infiltrations the Scottish performers still seem to have held their own".

of the druids was unwritten because it was inspired by nature: “This alone explains the reason why the druidic chant was unwritten. Being a panneustic possession, i.e. given by the inspiration of nature, one dared not commit it to a notation for vulgar edification lest it should lose its potency” (18-19). Phrases such as “Needless to point out” suggest a foregone conclusion without evaluation of the evidence available (79). The picture of early Scottish music history is actually very different: the sources are fragmentary, and the time is ripe for a systematic re-evaluation of the received view as presented by Farmer and those who followed him.

The first step in such a re-evaluation is to understand how the received view came into being. Again, because of his importance to later writers, and because he presents one of the more detailed accounts, Farmer provides the starting point. Not all of Farmer’s writing is unreferenced. Amongst those references he does provide, writers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are well represented: Farmer cites the work of James Beattie from the 1760s, Sir John Hawkins from 1776, Charles Burney also from 1776, William Skene from 1837 and William Dauney from 1838.<sup>6</sup>

## **1.2. Farmer’s Parallels with William Dauney**

Examining William Dauney’s 1838 *Ancient Scottish Melodies* is enlightening, since Farmer’s work shows a host of parallels with Dauney’s. Firstly, Farmer explicitly cites Dauney on a number of occasions, using Dauney’s work without evaluating it.<sup>7</sup> In addition, in places Farmer presents the same body of sources in more or less the same format as Dauney. For example, both use the lines on the death of Alexander III from Andrew of Wyntoun’s *Chronicle*, followed by the song on the siege of Berwick recorded in a Harleian manuscript, followed by lines from Fabyan on Bannockburn.<sup>8</sup> This parallelism may only finish here because Farmer divides his book up into time bound sections within which he then examines themes, whereas Dauney divides his essay up by theme and then examines each over his whole chronological spread.

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<sup>6</sup> Examples of Farmer citing these writers appear on the following pages: Beattie ‘The Minstrel’, 67; Hawkins, 62; Burney, 111; Skene, 94; Dauney, 52, 89.

<sup>7</sup> See for example Farmer’s comments on David I and the introduction of organs discussed above.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Dauney 1838, *Ancient Scotish Melodies*, 42-43; Farmer 1947, *History*, 47-48.

Dauney's work provides more detailed references to many of the points that Farmer also makes. A good example of this is the idea that harpers grew their nails especially long. Farmer simply states that "the performer plucked the wire strings with his fingernails which were grown very long for this purpose" (88). Dauney on the other hand cites "certayne matters concerning the realme of Scotland," &c., "as they were anno Domini 1597," (London, 1603,):

"The strings of the clairschoes are made of brasse wire, and the strings of the harps of sinews, which strings they strike, either with their nayles growing long, or else with an instrument appointed for that use." We may observe in passing, that what we have here quoted is merely a new version by this author of what Buchanan has stated on the same subject in his History of Scotland, Book I,

providing details of two sources of this particular piece of information.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to these clear, source-based similarities, Dauney and Farmer seem also to share a number of the underlying assumptions which were discussed in regard to Farmer above. Dauney, like Farmer, appears to subscribe to the teleological view of historical progress, he asserts the "rude", "uncivilized", "wild" and "barbarous" nature of the past throughout his writing, drawing an implicit contrast with the present.<sup>10</sup> Dauney describes some aspects of the music of the past in terms of a relative level of development: discussing how Mary Queen of Scots' taste in music had been fashioned at the court of France, he writes that "we have no reason to believe that our Scottish violars were at this time very distinguished either in point of musical skill or taste" (96). He describes the banning of the bagpipe in sixteenth-century Aberdeen as a "superior refinement" (127). Like Farmer, he seems to see some broader standard to cultural development to which Scottish music should be compared. Dauney expresses a view of the music of the peasantry as necessarily less ingenious and artificial than that of the higher social orders (129), which finds later parallels in Farmer's argument that the peasantry only began to contribute to culture in the period after 1124. Dauney, like Farmer, draws comparisons

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<sup>9</sup> Dauney 1838, *Ancient Scottish Melodies*, 89-90.

<sup>10</sup> See Dauney 1838, *Ancient Scottish Melodies*, 59, 131 and 200 for example. Subsequent references to this publication will appear in parentheses in the main text.

over long time periods, and over wide geographical areas, a practice which may be partly explained by the idea which underlies his comment that “Pastoral life is necessarily much the same in all ages and in all countries”.<sup>11</sup>

Dauney’s work seems, then, to have been underpinned by the same ideas as underpinned Farmer, in addition to providing elements of Farmer’s sources and a template for discussing them. Dauney seems to have been a key player in the formation of elements of the present-day received view.

Throughout the ‘Preliminary Dissertation’ to *Ancient Scottish Melodies* Dauney refers to writings on Scottish music history written during the eighteenth and early part of the nineteenth centuries. Dauney seems to see himself as the forefront of a tradition of writing the history of Scottish music which arose in the eighteenth century. He writes that “about fifty or sixty years ago, the melodies of Scotland, from their increasing celebrity, came to be a topic of antiquarian discussion”, and goes on to briefly outline the interventions of Burney, William Tytler and Ritson (134-137). He conveys a sense of building on past work when he writes that:

since the time when Mr Ritson [was writing]...we have not only been so fortunate as to recover the valuable collection which forms the subject of the present publication, but several others of considerable interest and antiquity.... When fully revealed, they cannot fail to put the public in possession of a large fund of ancient popular melody, which has long been considered lost, and which, but for them, would have been irretrievable (136-137).

Although he is frequently critical of the writers of the past, writing, for example, of a range of writers including Dr Beattie, Lord Kames and William Tytler that “Had they been as diligent investigators of facts, and as cautious commentators upon them, as his Lordship [Lord Hailes], there can be little doubt that we should, ere now, have been in possession of information, touching this topic [the history of music in Scotland], infinitely more distinct and authentic than any thing that can be gathered from their writings” (2),

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<sup>11</sup> For comparisons over a long time period see Dauney’s comment with regard to the harp on p62; for comparisons over a wide geographical area see Dauney’s comments on the cornett on p114. Dauney’s comment on pastoral life can be found on p130.

he does draw on their work throughout. Dauney, then, occupies a pivot point in the creation of the received view of Scottish music history: he forms a key source for the work of Farmer, yet sees himself as the latest intervention in a field much studied in the eighteenth century.

### **1.3. Secondary Literature**

As can be seen from the titles in Table 1, the writings which form the key sources for this study come from a diverse range of genres: song and ballad collections, editions of “ancient” poetry and literature, general histories of music, essays on Scottish music history in periodicals or encyclopaedias, and philosophical writings about human nature. Many of these have already been studied from a musical point of view.

The song collections and collectors in particular have been extensively studied, both in general histories of Scottish music and in more specialised studies. Farmer, Elliott and Rimmer and Davie all discuss the vogue for song collecting in the early eighteenth century. The collections published by Allan Ramsay, William Thomson, David Herd, George Thomson, Joseph Ritson and Alexander Campbell are all discussed. In addition, more specialised studies take song collections as a topic for more detailed focus: David Johnson's 1972/2003 *Music and Society in Lowland Scotland in the Eighteenth Century*; Claire Nelson's 2000 article ‘Tea-Table Miscellanies: The Development of Scotland's Song Culture, 1720-1800’ in *Early Music* and her 2003 thesis *Creating a Notion of ‘Britishness’: The Role of Scottish Music in the Negotiation of a Common Culture, with Particular Reference to the Eighteenth-Century Accompanied Sonata*; Matthew Gelbart's 2002 thesis *Scotland and the Emergence of "Folk Music" and "Art Music" in Europe, 1720-1850* and similarly titled 2007 book *The Invention of "Folk Music" and "Art Music": Emerging Categories from Ossian to Wagner*; and Karen McAulay's 2009 thesis *Our Ancient National Airs: Scottish Song Collecting c.1760-1888* all focus on a selection of the sources for this present study.<sup>12</sup> Some publications examined in the study have also received individual attention, such as William McCarthy's 1990 book *The Ballad Matrix*:

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<sup>12</sup> McAulay's resulting book, *Our Ancient National Airs: Scottish Song Collecting from the Enlightenment to the Romantic Era* (Farnham, 2013) was published at the very moment this thesis was completed.

*Personality, Milieu and the Oral Tradition* which examines the collecting and record keeping of William Motherwell, the compiler of *Minstrelsy: Ancient and Modern*.

The writers of the general interest histories of music mentioned in the preface tend not to discuss the writings about the history of the music which often accompany eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century song collections. They tend to focus instead either on the relationship between “folk” and “art” music suggested by the collections, or on the relationship between published collections and a perceived body of orally transmitted “folk” song. Elliott, for example, discusses song collectors briefly as part of a narrative about the separation of folk and art music in the eighteenth century: he laments the separation and sees George Thomson as attempting to bridge the gap between them. He characterises antiquarian collecting in the last two decades of the eighteenth century as a search for the roots of folk songs.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Davie discusses eighteenth-century song collections as part of a narrative of the loss of traditional material. He evaluates collections based on their faithfulness to a tradition which he never quite defines: Ramsay’s work is criticised for leading to the loss of “much vigorous genuine traditional material”, whereas Herd is praised for countering the damage done by Ramsay. Ritson is praised for his “clean and accurate” texts, and on the other hand George Thomson is criticised for his alterations.<sup>14</sup>

Farmer, unlike the other writers of general interest music histories discussed above, does briefly discuss writings about the history of song: he touches on the ascription of songs to David Rizzio, one of the gentlemen of the privy chamber of Mary Queen of Scots, by some writers;<sup>15</sup> and he briefly describes the work of Herd, Tytler, Ritson and Campbell as “paying compliments to the national music in its historic role”. As might be expected

<sup>13</sup> Elliott and Rimmer 1973, *History of Scottish Music*, 54-59. David Johnson presents another example of this type of thinking: He characterises the antiquarian movement in collecting, and writers who discuss the historic nature of the material, such as Tytler and Scott, as a symptom of the upper classes trying to hang on to an oral tradition that they were no longer part of through print (Johnson 2003, *Music and Society*, 196-198). He criticises the post-1780 song and ballad collections by Thomson and Scott for not achieving the right “blend” of “scholarship, taste, and popular appeal” (145-146).

<sup>14</sup> Thorpe Davie 1980, *Scotland’s Music*, 11, 13, 15-16.

<sup>15</sup> Farmer 1947, *History*, 252. Subsequent references to this publication will appear in parentheses in the main text.

from a book which attempts such a wide overview of music history, none of the writers are examined in depth, and most of Farmer's commentary focuses on evaluation of the different writers against a standard which, like Davie's, is never defined: Herd is described as "trustworthy", Tytler as "quite uncritical", and Campbell as possessing "a fine critical sense" (259-261).

The narratives produced by Farmer, Elliott, Davie and Johnson all share the perception that song collections and associated contemporary writings about those songs are best understood as "folk" or "traditional" music. Recent work by Matthew Gelbart challenges this perception. Gelbart argues that for much of the period in question the concept of "folk music" as we currently understand it did not exist. He argues that many of the writings which form the basis of this study contained expressions of ideas which went on to become the basis of the separation of "folk" and "art" music. In particular, the discussions about the origins and scale types of songs reveal preoccupations which led to the development of the concept of "folk" music. Farmer, Elliott, Thorpe Davie and Johnson's narratives apply the concept of "folk" or "traditional" music anachronistically to these early published song collections. Such anachronistic understanding of these collections may explain the lack of interest in the writings on Scottish music history which often appear in the prefaces or introductory essays accompanying such collections. The much-quoted definition of folk music produced by the International Folk Council in 1954 reads:

Folk music is the product of a musical tradition that has been evolved through the process of oral transmission. The factors that shape the tradition are: (i) continuity which links the present with the past; (ii) variation which springs from the creative impulse of the individual or the group; and (iii) selection by the community, which determines the form or forms in which the music survives.

The term can be applied to music that has been evolved from rudimentary beginnings by a community uninfluenced by popular and art music and it can likewise be applied to music which has originated with an individual composer and has subsequently been absorbed into the unwritten living tradition of a community.

The term does not cover composed popular music that has been taken over ready-made by a community and remains unchanged, for it is the re-fashioning and re-creation of the music by the community that gives it its folk character.<sup>16</sup>

The definition given above stresses the role of time in the definition of folk music, most clearly in the “continuity which links the present with the past”, and the “evolved from rudimentary beginnings”. Folk music is defined by its past. Through invoking the terms “folk” or “traditional” music in their discussions of song collections, the twentieth- and twenty-first-century writers discussed above reveal an expectation that the music would have had historic roots. This expectation may lie at the base of their lack of interest in the historical writings associated with song collections.

In recent years a number of writers have moved away from this narrow focus on the relationship between song collections and folk music, to look in more detail at their relationship to the cultural and philosophical context in which they were produced. It is on these studies that the current investigation builds, focussing on the “sense of history, and an awareness of a corpus of uniquely Scottish songs and airs [that] pervades each” of the collections, as Karen McAulay puts it in her 2009 thesis, *Our Ancient National Airs: Scottish Song Collecting c.1760-1888*.<sup>17</sup>

Claire Nelson, for example, has examined ideas about the antiquity of song and its simplicity in her 2000 article, ‘Tea-Table Miscellanies: The Development of Scotland’s Song Culture, 1720-1800’, and 2003 thesis, *Creating a Notion of ‘Britishness’; the Role of Scottish Music in the Negotiation of a Common Culture, with Particular Reference to the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Accompanied Sonata*. Nelson examines ideas about the antiquity of Scots

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<sup>16</sup> International Folk Music Council 1955, *Resolutions*, 23. This definition has not been uncontested, early discussion of it appearing in the same edition of the *Journal of the International Folk Music Council* in which the resolution itself was first published (See Karpeles 1955, *Definition of Folk Music*, 6), and as Gelbart notes, the definition of folk music relies on there being a definition of art music that it can exclude, and vice versa (Gelbart 2007, *The Invention of “Folk” and “Art” Music*, 7).

<sup>17</sup> McAulay 2009, *Our Ancient National Airs*, 249.

songs and their perceived simplicity in the context of changing performance practice<sup>18</sup> and the role of Scottish culture in the negotiation of the new Britain.<sup>19</sup>

In her 2000 article, Nelson examines how philosophers and antiquarians valued simple performance of songs, an intellectual position which they underpinned by reference to the work of Rousseau on the characteristics of ancient music. Nelson not only uses many of the collections of songs discussed above, she also examines the writings associated with them, in prefaces to collections and elsewhere, such as John Ramsay of Ochtertyre's 1790 article 'On Scottish Songs' in the periodical *The Bee*. The simplicity and naturalness of Scottish music are discussed again by Nelson in 2003. Nelson argues that certain philosophical positions with regard to simplicity allowed Scottish music to be portrayed as retaining older, more morally acceptable traits than modern music.<sup>20</sup>

In *The Invention of "Folk" and "Art" Music* Matthew Gelbart also discusses aspects of song collections germane to the present study. Firstly, Gelbart discusses the "origin myths" of Scots songs which were a subject of great interest to writers in the eighteenth century. These origin myths will be outlined more fully in chapter 2, but to summarise: over the course of the eighteenth century the composition of Scots songs was ascribed at various points to David Rizzio, James I, the monks of Melrose and real shepherds. Gelbart argues that the David Rizzio/James I attributions and discussions reflect the "shifting emphases in the search for the origins of musical works" from the early eighteenth century.<sup>21</sup> The

<sup>18</sup> Over the course of the eighteenth century more complex and ornamented arrangements of songs for larger instrumental ensembles became common. Nelson sees those who favoured more complex arrangements winning out over those who valued simplicity. She suggests a number of reasons for this, including the idea that late eighteenth-century Scots wanted their song culture to stand up in a European context (Nelson 2000, *Tea-Table Miscellanies*, 601-608, 615-616).

<sup>19</sup> Nelson argues that the effect of the publication of the works of Ossian was to give Scottish culture, including music, "an historicity and strength of origin that captivated audiences worldwide". "Civilised" Scottish music, focussed on the types of song melodies discussed in the present study, became popular in England, and, in the wake of English insecurities about English national culture, became "the acceptable face" of British national identity. Nelson concludes that "In thus defining themselves as Britain's cultural homeland, by 1800 the Scots had thereby ensured their pre-eminence and visibility as the era of Empire commenced, despite the transferral of power to the English capital, London" (Nelson 2003, *Creating a notion of 'Britishness'* vol 1, 302-303, 310).

<sup>20</sup> See for example Nelson 2003, *Creating a notion of 'Britishness'* vol 1, 57.

<sup>21</sup> Gelbart 2007, *The Invention of "Folk" and "Art" Music*, 33. Subsequent references to this publication will appear in parentheses in the main text.

search for the origins of music had become an important concern as a result of a shift from viewing the nation as an extended racial family, or a group who owed allegiance to a divinely sanctioned monarch, to the idea of the nation as a shared culture with essentialised traits (24-27). The focus on shared culture meant that music became an important element of cultural capital. Gelbart describes the initial attribution of song composition to David Rizzio as “a brilliant choice: a famous name connected to a famous event – recognizably Italian, even associated with royalty; and to boot he was a musician and known to have spent time in Scotland in the murky past”. Unfortunately the Rizzio attribution became unpopular following a backlash against Italian culture from the mid-eighteenth century. The attribution of song to James I, which replaced the Rizzio attribution, was more acceptable because James was a Scot, and because he had been “certified”, as Gelbart puts it, by two foreigners: both Tassoni and Sir John Hawkins lauded James’s work in improving Italian music. Gelbart concludes that “the changing mythology reflects the tightening boundaries circumscribing musical categories across the eighteenth century, as creative origins became increasingly vital to musical understanding, and increasingly politicized” (35-39). He argues that it is this transfer of interest from the function of music to its origin, in which the Rizzio/James I debate played a part, which was a necessary precursor to the ideas of a split between “folk” and “art” music (15).

Gelbart sees the change to the idea that shepherds were responsible for national song as a result of a change in ideas about how works of art were created, to focus on the role of one individual genius, and an associated change in perceptions of national song from a vague body to a collection of individual artefacts “whose history needed to be explained in realistic ways in order to make politically expedient claims of origin” (81-83). During the 1760s and 1770s it was assumed that the “genius of a nation” was best captured by the trained upper-class bards of the past (83). Ritson suggested a role for the “lowest classes” (86), but it was only in the work of James Beattie that composition by the “vulgar” came to be seen as “the backbone of a nation’s representative music”, “*the ‘national’ culture*” (91). Gelbart argues that it was this change in thought which brought “national” music closer to our more familiar idea of folk music (98).

The second aspect of Gelbart's discussion which is shared with this thesis is the focus on discussions of the scale types of songs.<sup>22</sup> Again, the eighteenth-century discussions will be outlined in more detail in later chapters, but to briefly summarise: from the 1760s writers attempted to define the melodic characteristics of Scots songs, focussing on certain concords, particularly thirds and sixths, and on varieties of gapped scales. From the work of Burney in the 1760s onwards, parallels were drawn between the scale types of purportedly ancient Scots songs and "Oriental" music. Gelbart argues that this link and the focus on scale types led to "an overarching theory of folk modality with enduring repercussions" (115).

The current study builds on these elements of Nelson and Gelbart's work. It will be argued that the philosophical link between the simplicity and antiquity of Scots songs that Nelson discusses fundamentally underpinned much of the writing of Scottish music history: not simply through allowing song to be considered ancient, but also through the creation of historical narratives as a result of writers' attempts to reconcile songs that were apparently too complex to the criteria of ancient simplicity. It is in this context that this study will build on Gelbart's discussion of scale types: the manipulation of songs to force them to conform to those scale types perceived to be the most simple and ancient will be used to show the wide reach of the master narrative of historical development from simple to complex.

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<sup>22</sup> Throughout this thesis the term "scale" will be used in preference to "mode". While technically "mode", in its sense of a collection of pitches might be considered more correct than "scale" - a sequence of notes in ascending or descending order of pitch – "scale" will be used in preference for the following reasons: firstly, to avoid association with the particular use of the term "mode" to draw a distinction between "modal" folk and non-western musics and "tonal" western art music. In light of these connotations, use of the term "mode" with regard to the songs discussed in this thesis runs the risk of appearing to present a "folk" tradition with all the connotations expressed in the International Folk Council's definition given earlier in this chapter. Gelbart's work on the development of the concepts of "folk" and "art" music over this period challenges earlier commentators' understanding of this repertoire as "folk" music. The related second reason is that, as will be further discussed in chapter 4, the writers discussed in this thesis do not see the scales/modes of historic music as distinctly different to those of eighteenth-century music, merely primitive, stripped back versions. "Scale" is therefore used in this thesis to avoid undermining this sense of continuity by the use of term "mode" with its potential connotations of a distinct difference. Finally, the use of "scale" in this thesis mirrors the terminology used by eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century writers themselves.

Both Nelson and Gelbart discuss Scots songs in a broad European context, looking at the philosophy of Rousseau, for example, and the desire of some Scots to have a European musical culture.<sup>23</sup> The current study will argue that such an international focus is also evident in the writing of Scottish music history, for example, in the use of ideas about the past at the forefront of contemporary Enlightenment thought, twinned with ideas about specifically Scottish historical events and concerns.

Studies of individual collectors, such as Dennis Read's 2011 biography of the engraver, editor and entrepreneur Richard Hartley Cromeck, and William McCarthy's 1990 study of William Motherwell's 1827 *Minstrelsy: Ancient and Modern, The Ballad Matrix*, provide important background to this study, although they tend not to discuss the introductory writings on the history of the music which accompany the publications of the collectors they study.<sup>24</sup>

Scottish Enlightenment historical thought has been extensively studied by Alexander Broadie, Colin Kidd and Murray Pittock, amongst others. Music history has, so far however, been missing. This is despite the widespread eighteenth-century interest in the subject, the volume of attestations of the historic nature of Scottish music, and the engagement of some of the key Enlightenment thinkers in the field: Lord Kames, Benjamin Franklin, and James Beattie amongst them.

This study then builds on the work of writers such as Nelson, Gelbart and McAulay, who have all examined aspects of song collections and writings about them in their wider cultural context. The present study not only seeks to reveal the constructed nature of our received view of Scottish music history, in so doing it will also call attention to this

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<sup>23</sup> Nelson 2000, *Tea-Table Miscellanies*, 601-608, 615-616.

<sup>24</sup> Read focusses on the origins of the songs and ballads included in Richard Hartley Cromeck's 1810 *Remains of Nithsdale and Galloway Song*, highlighting the role of the poet and stonemason Allan Cunningham in the composition of the supposedly ancient material (Read 2011, *R. H. Cromeck*, chapter 7). McCarthy focusses on what the material that Motherwell collected from the singer Agnes Lyle reveals about ballad formulae, ballad technique and oral theory (McCarthy 1990, *Ballad Matrix*, 21), and about the degree to which a singer could influence the form that a ballad took, from their recreative technique, through to the impact of their political and social attitudes on the character development and plot structure (McCarthy 1990, *Ballad Matrix*, 13).

hitherto neglected aspect of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century publications on Scottish music. This study will show that writing about music was very much part of cutting-edge perceptions about the nature of the past and historical progress, and part of important Enlightenment disciplines such as the study of manners. Studying the music historiography of the Scottish Enlightenment adds another facet to our understanding of eighteenth-century historical thought that has so far been missing.

#### **1.4. The Level of Interest in Scottish Music History**

The level of interest in the antiquity of Scottish music in publications of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is striking. Firstly, the historical aspect of Scottish music appears almost from the very beginning of the idea of Scottish music. Matthew Gelbart sees the works of Allan Ramsay in the 1720s as central to the formation of the idea of Scottish music, including the earliest publication considered in the present study: Allan Ramsay's collection of songs *The Tea-Table Miscellany*.<sup>25</sup> Secondly, the large number of publications published between the 1720s and 1838 which make reference to the historic nature of Scottish music show the level of interest in this aspect. In the course of this study ninety-four collections of Scottish songs or ballads published between 1720 and 1838 were examined. Of these, just under half contained some sort of indication of a perception of the ancient nature of at least some of the materials included, ranging from simply using the word "ancient" in the title to extended historical discussions.<sup>26</sup> Thirdly, the level of attention which some writers devote to writing about the history of the music shows how important the subject was to their understanding of the nature of Scottish music; an extreme example is Joseph Ritson's 1794 publication *Scotish Songs* of which 108 pages of the 250 page first volume are devoted to 'A Historical Essay On Scotish Song'. Ritson is not, however, alone: William Tytler, John Ramsay of Ochtertyre, John Pinkerton, Alexander Campbell, William Motherwell and William Dauney all write substantial essays on the history of Scottish music. Fourthly, John Pinkerton and George Thomson both make comments in their publications which point to a widespread

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<sup>25</sup> Gelbart 2012, *Allan Ramsay: the Idea of 'Scottish Music'*, 81.

<sup>26</sup> A list of those publications which are not identified as key sources for this study but in which ideas about the antiquity of Scottish music appear is included in Appendix 1.

recognition of the importance of music-historical writing over this period. Towards the end of his 1783 ‘Dissertation on the Comic Ballad’ Pinkerton writes that “It may perhaps be expected that, before closing this essay, I should offer some remarks on Scottish Music, a subject of much interest and curiosity to every lover of that best sort of melody which speaks to the heart and passions”.<sup>27</sup> Thomson notes that discussion of the composers and style of Scottish melodies “may form an appropriate introduction to a Collection...”,<sup>28</sup> acknowledging the popularity of such writings.

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<sup>27</sup> Pinkerton 1783, *Select Scottish Ballads*, Vol. 2, xxxvii.

<sup>28</sup> Thomson 1822, *Select Melodies of Scotland*, 3.

## 2. Scottish Music History, c.1720-1838

"The following marked *C, D, H, L, M, O, &c.* are new Words by different Hands, *X*, the Authors unknown; *Z*, old Songs; *Q.* old Songs with Additions", wrote Allan Ramsay at the top of the contents page of *The Tea-Table Miscellany* in 1724.<sup>1</sup> In so doing, Ramsay was the first to state in print the idea that Scottish song, or Scottish music of any kind, had a history, and that the age of songs was interesting or important enough to write about. Over the course of the long following century, an idea which began with this isolated comment was to become subject to great debate and voluminous writings, culminating in the extensive historical essay produced by William Dauney in 1838. This chapter will present an overview of historical debates about music over the course of this period in order to provide the background and chronological framework for the following, more thematic, discussions which follow in subsequent chapters.

### 2.1. Allan Ramsay and The Tea-Table Miscellany

Allan Ramsay was born in 1684 in Leadhills in the Borders, and in 1701 apprenticed to a wig maker in Edinburgh. In Edinburgh, Ramsay became interested in literature and in writing in Scots, producing poems in Scots throughout the 1710s, many for the Easy Club, a social club with Jacobite leanings. By 1718 he had begun to work as a bookseller and to publish his own work. As well as writing new poems in Scots Ramsay was interested in Scottish poetry from the past: in 1716-18 he completed and published the unfinished medieval poem 'Christ's Kirk on the Green', and in 1724 he published a collection of poems in Scots drawn from the sixteenth-century Bannatyne Manuscript, entitled *The Evergreen*.<sup>2</sup>

In 1723 Ramsay published the first volume of *The Tea-Table Miscellany*, a collection of songs. The *Miscellany* eventually ran to four volumes, the first editions of the subsequent three volumes being published in 1726, 1727 and 1737.<sup>3</sup> The *Miscellany* became hugely popular, going through twelve editions in Ramsay's own lifetime, and continuing to be

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<sup>1</sup> Ramsay 1724, *Tea-Table Miscellany*, 179.

<sup>2</sup> Pittock 2004, *Allan Ramsay*.

<sup>3</sup> Kinghorn and Law 1974, *Works of Allan Ramsay*, 9-13.

reissued afterwards. Some of the editions are no longer extant, a circumstance that Johnson suggests demonstrates heavy use,<sup>4</sup> although the cheap format and Ramsay's mass market focus might also account for this: despite Ramsay's ambitions set out in the dedicatory poem – discussed below - the *Miscellany* may not have been purchased by the elite members of society whose libraries have survived. A number of pirated editions were also issued, including *A New Miscellany of Scots Sangs* published in London in 1727 "Printed for A. Moore, and sold by the booksellers of London and Westminster".<sup>5</sup> The London publisher William Thomson's 1726 collection *Orpheus Caledonius*, which drew heavily on the material from the *Miscellany*, attracted a large number of subscribers, headed by the Price of Wales.<sup>6</sup> Only one copy of the 1723 edition of the *Miscellany* is still extant, and so the earliest edition consulted for this study has been the 1724 edition.<sup>7</sup>

*The Tea-Table Miscellany* consists of song texts only. That the texts were intended for singing is shown by the indication "To the tune of..." or "To it's own [or "ain"] Tune" for some of the songs,<sup>8</sup> and by Ramsay's collaboration with Alexander Stuart on *Musick For Allan Ramsay's Collection of Scots Songs* of 1726 which provides tunes for sixty-nine songs in the first volume of the *Miscellany*. Ramsay's dedicatory poem which appears at the front of the *Miscellany* also refers to the songs being sung: "TO *Ilka lovely British Lass, Frae Ladys Charlotte, Anne and Jean, Down to ilk bonny singing Bess, Wha dances barefoot on the Green.*"<sup>9</sup>

Ramsay's dedicatory poem refers to young ladies across the social spectrum singing songs in a domestic setting, from the spinet-playing of young ladies at the top end, to those at the lower end:

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<sup>4</sup> Johnson 2003, *Music and Society*, 143.

<sup>5</sup> Johnson 2003, *Music and Society*, 143. Treadwell notes that "A. Moore" was a false printer's name widely used in the 1720s and 1730s (Treadwell 1989, *False and Misleading Imprints*, 41-43).

<sup>6</sup> Johnson 2003, *Music and Society*, 140. In 1729 Ramsay criticised Thomson's plagiarism: "he ought to have acquainted his Illustrious List of Subscribers, that the most of the Songs were mine, the Musick abstracted" (Ramsay 1729, *Tea-Table Miscellany, Dublin* 1729, vii-viii).

<sup>7</sup> The unique copy is housed at Yale. For bibliographical details see Kinghorn and Law 1974, *Works of Allan Ramsay*, 7.

<sup>8</sup> 'Nansy's to the green Wood gane' and 'Maggie's Tocher'.

<sup>9</sup> Ramsay 1724, *Tea-Table Miscellany*, iii.

THE Wanton Wee Thing will rejoice,  
When tented by a sparkling Een,  
The Spinnet tinkling with her Voice,  
It lying on her lovely Knee.

While Kettles dringe on Ingles dure,  
Or Clashes stays the lazy lass,  
Thir Sangs may ward you frae the sowe,  
And gaily vacant Minutes pass.<sup>10</sup>

Whether Ramsay intended his poem to reflect current or anticipated use of the songs in the *Miscellany* is not clear, but that the melodies and/or texts of such songs had been sung or played across the social spectrum, and continued to be so seems likely. We will see in chapter 3 that tunes with the same names as some of the songs included in the *Miscellany* had been included in the instrumental collections of elite in the seventeenth century. The *Miscellany*, however, was published in one of the cheaper book formats, in duodecimo,<sup>11</sup> and so appears to have been aimed at lower ranks in society. The appearance of the songs without music, suggests that the tunes were already known amongst this group as well. The publication of the large, expensive format *Orpheus Caledonius* in 1725, with its elite subscribers headed by the Prince of Wales, shows that, even if the *Miscellany* had not been published in a form designed to target the elite audience, Ramsay's songs had been embraced by the elite. When Ramsay published *Musick For Allan Ramsay's Collection of Scots Songs* in 1726 the frontispiece depicts a well-dressed young lady sitting at a harpsichord accompanied by a similarly well-dressed young man with a viola da gamba. The significance of the singing of Scots songs by the elite in society for the writing of Scottish music history will be discussed in chapter 4.

Ramsay's description of the "old Songs" and "old Songs with Additions" leaves open some ambiguity as to whether he perceived the words or the melodies or both to be old. The lack of indication of a tune for six of the eleven "old songs", or "old songs with additions",<sup>12</sup> suggests that in 1724 Ramsay saw the text and melody as so indivisible that giving the names of the melodies was not necessary and so it seems likely that in 1724 he

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<sup>10</sup> Ramsay 1724, *Tea-Table Miscellany*, iv.

<sup>11</sup> Munck 2002, *Enlightenment*, 76, 79.

<sup>12</sup> "Old songs" - 'Muirland Willy', 'For the Love of Jean' and 'Blythsome Bridle'. "Old songs with additions" - 'Janet Jo', 'Auld Rob Moris' and 'Ew Bought Marion'.

perceived the melodies to the old songs as being ancient too. That Ramsay could have held the perception these melodies were historic is supported by the appearance of six of the melodies in the seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century manuscripts examined by Evelyn Stell in her study of the sources of Scottish instrumental music before 1707.<sup>13</sup>

Ramsay's position was clarified in the 1729 edition of the *Miscellany*, in the preface to which he writes:

Altho' it be acknowledged, that our Scots Tunes have not lengthened Variety of Musick, yet they have an agreeable Gaiety and natural Sweetness, that make them acceptable wherever they are known, not only among our selves, but in other Countries. They are for the most part so cheerful, that on hearing them well play'd or sung, we find a Difficulty to keep our selves from dancing. What further adds to the Esteem we have for them, is, their Antiquity, and their being universally known.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to clarifying that he saw both texts and melodies as historic, Ramsay's 1729 preface characterises Scots tunes. This characterisation was key to the understanding of song as historic and will be discussed in further detail in chapter 3. It is not clear from either the 1724 or the 1729 edition exactly how old or ancient Ramsay considered the songs and their tunes to be.

## 2.2. *Orpheus Caledonius* and David Rizzio

The *Tea-Table Miscellany* is a significant publication not only for being the first in which the idea that Scottish music's history was considered important enough to be commented on, but also for catalysing an interest in publishing Scots song and in investigating its past

<sup>13</sup> 'Nancy's to the greenwood gone' and 'Auld Rob Morris' appear in the Gairdyn MS; 'The Kirk wad let me be', which may also have been the tune used for 'The Blythsome Bridal' (the text appears under the title 'Kirk wad let me be' in *Orpheus Caledonius* in 1725), appears in the Balcarres and Guthrie MSS; 'Dainty Davy' appears in the Panmure keyboard MS; and 'For the love of JEAN' appears in the Balcarres and Newbattle 1A MSS (See Stell 1999, *Sources of Scottish Instrumental Music*). The further five titles do not appear in the manuscripts examined by Stell. Sadly, the majority of these five titles are not considered in the other major secondary source of information regarding seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century sources of the tunes to Scots songs, John Glen 1900, *Early Scottish Melodies*.

<sup>14</sup> Ramsay 1729, *Tea-Table Miscellany*, Dublin 1729, v.

which was to form the basis of the writing of Scottish music history throughout the eighteenth and into the nineteenth centuries.

In *Music and Society in Lowland Scotland in the Eighteenth Century* David Johnson argues that Ramsay's repertoire became canonized: "synonymous with the very idea of 'Scots song'".<sup>15</sup> William Thomson's use of the *Miscellany* in *Orpheus Caledonius* of 1725 has already been noted. Other publications such as Robert Bremner's 1757 collection *Thirty Scots Songs for a voice and harpsichord. The music taken from the most genuine sets extant: the words from Allan Ramsay* reveal the importance of Ramsay's work to subsequent publications in their titles.<sup>16</sup> The songs published by Ramsay became so ubiquitous in collections that the compiler of the 1776 collection *The Nightingale: A Collection of Ancient and Modern Songs, scots and English* added to his title page "None of which are in Ramsay", perhaps as a selling point. The songs published by Ramsay became the subject of complex arrangements, often with opening and concluding instrumental "symphonies".<sup>17</sup> Many editors followed Ramsay in labelling songs and their tunes as "old" or "ancient".<sup>18</sup>

In *Orpheus Caledonius* Thomson attributed seven songs to "David Rezzio", one of the gentlemen of the privy chamber of Mary Queen of Scots.<sup>19</sup> Thomson's ascription was followed by other writers, including James Oswald in his 1743 *Second Collection of Curious Scots Tunes*.<sup>20</sup> These claims have been examined in some detail by Gelbart in his 2007 study of the development of the concepts of "folk" and "art" music in the eighteenth century. Gelbart examines in particular the backlash against the Rizzio attributions in Oswald's 1743 collection, arguing that it is indicative of the increasing importance of the national origins of music in its classification.<sup>21</sup> For the purposes of the current study, however, the Rizzio claims allow us to roughly date the perceived age of at

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<sup>15</sup> Johnson 2003, *Music and Society*, 141, 143.

<sup>16</sup> Nelson 2000, *Tea-Table Miscellanies*, 600.

<sup>17</sup> Johnson 2003, *Music and Society*, 141-142; Nelson 2000, *Tea-Table Miscellanies*, 609 et seq.

<sup>18</sup> In addition to *The Nightingale*, examples include Barsanti 1742, *A collection of Old Scots Tunes*, and Burns 1999, *Merry Muses of Caledonia*.

<sup>19</sup> Marshall 2004, *David Riccio*.

<sup>20</sup> For further examples see Farmer 1947, *History*, 252; Glen 1900, *Early Scottish Melodies*, 248.

<sup>21</sup> Gelbart 2007, *The Invention of "Folk" and "Art" Music*, 34-39.

least some “old” or “ancient” music to the mid-sixteenth century, Rizzio having been in Scotland from 1561-1566.<sup>22</sup>

Labelling songs as “old” or “ancient” and/or attributing their composition to David Rizzio, however, was often the full extent of published writers’ engagement with Scottish music history prior to the 1770s.

### **2.3.The Writing of Scottish Music History After 1770**

The major period in the writing of Scottish music history began in the 1770s, as demonstrated by the dates of the publications in Table 1. From this time the range and depth of publications which covered Scottish music history increased. Where the history of Scottish music had previously been confined to assertions of ancientness in the titles of song collections and ascriptions of individual songs to David Rizzio, from the later part of the century more extensive accounts appeared in a variety of different contexts.

The published books and articles which refer to Scottish music history can be divided up into a number of broad and interrelated categories of material: the largest group of sources for this study consists of collections of songs and/or ballads. Joseph Ritson’s 1794 *Scotish Songs*, for example includes much information about perceptions of the Scottish musical past in the introductory ‘A Historical Essay on Scotish Song’, but the main body of the book consists of a collection of songs. Information about the history of song appears in publications whose main focus is poetry, such as Alexander Campbell’s 1798 *An Introduction to the history of poetry in Scotland*: his title shows a focus on poetry, and his ideas about the history of Scottish music appear in the context of discussions about poetry, yet a large part of the body of the book is taken up with a collection of songs, many of which are common to those found in collections in the first category. A third group of sources is made up of writings about music history. This group falls into two sub-categories: writings about music history in general which cover Scotland as part of a broader overview; and publications which are solely concerned with the music history of Scotland. Into the first sub-category fall the well-known general music histories published

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<sup>22</sup> Marshall 2004, *David Riccio*.

in 1776, John Hawkins' *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music*, and Charles Burney's *A General History of Music, from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period*. William Tytler's 1779 'Dissertation on the Scottish Musick' falls into the second category, having its focus on Scottish music history, and appearing in Hugo Arnot's *The History of Edinburgh*. It should be reiterated at this point that these categories are intended as an aid to understanding the broad types of materials and platforms for the discussion of Scottish music history available and are not intended to give the impression of rigid distinctions between different categories of publications; Tytler's 1783 version of his 'Dissertation' could equally be considered as part of an edition of poetry since this version is appended to the *Poetical Remains of James the First, King of Scotland*. Benjamin Franklin's letter to Lord Kames which featured in the article on music in the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in 1781 is so far a lone example of ideas about Scottish music history appearing in writings about music without a specifically historical focus. Finally, there are writings about human nature which touch on Scottish music history such as Lord Kames' 1774 *Sketches of the History of Man* and James Beattie's 1776 'Remarks on Music' in his collected *Essays: On Poetry and Music, as they Affect the Mind; On Laughter, and Ludicrous Composition; On the Usefulness of Classical Learning*.

The majority of the writers either worked in the field of law or had been trained in law. David Herd, for example, was a law clerk and then became a "writer" or solicitor. Lord Kames was a judge, Pinkerton had been apprenticed to a writer of the signet as a teenager and Ramsay of Ochtertyre trained as an advocate. Hawkins, Tytler, Ritson, Scott and Skene also all worked in legal professions.<sup>23</sup>

Other writers were drawn from professional groups: Burney and Alexander Campbell were musicians; Allan Ramsay held a number of roles including bookseller and poet; Patrick McDonald was a clergyman. Amongst the writers of the major sources of this

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<sup>23</sup> Donaldson 2004, *David Herd*; Durie and Handley 2004, *Henry Home, Lord Kames*; Couper 2004, *Pinkerton*; Horn 2008, *Ramsay, John, of Ochtertyre*; Wagstaff 2004, *Hawkins*; Mackay and Couper 2004, *William Tytler*; Barczewski 2004, *Ritson*; Hewitt 2004, *Walter Scott*; Mackay and Sellar 2004, *Skene*.

study it was only James Beattie who was an academic, employed as professor of moral philosophy and logic at Marischal College in Aberdeen.<sup>24</sup>

The largest group of sources were written by writers living in Edinburgh or its immediate vicinity. Allan Ramsay, as previously noted, was resident in the city, as were David Herd and Lord Kames. William Tytler was born and educated in Edinburgh and later acquired the estate of Woodhouselee six miles to the south of Edinburgh.<sup>25</sup> John Pinkerton, another writer who published works of interest to the current study in 1781, 1783 and 1786, was born in Edinburgh in 1758 and lived there until his move to London in 1781.<sup>26</sup>

James Beattie lived in another of the thriving metropolitan centres of the Scottish Enlightenment, Aberdeen. Ramsay of Ochtertyre and Patrick McDonald were unusual in not being based at a metropolitan centre, Ramsay of Ochtertyre living outside Stirling and Patrick McDonald at Kilmore in Argyll. Hawkins, Burney, Ritson and Cromeck all made interventions from south of the border.

Beattie's *Essay on Poetry and Music as they Affect the Mind*, in which his ideas about ancient Scottish music appear, was written for the Aberdeen Philosophical Society, described by Beattie in the introduction to the 1776 edition of his collected essays as "a private literary society".<sup>27</sup> Such societies were an important part of the life of the literati of the Scottish Enlightenment, and flourished across Scotland, particularly in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen where many of the writers on Scottish music history were based.<sup>28</sup> Ramsay, Herd and Tytler are all known to have been members of such clubs.<sup>29</sup> The members of such clubs represented a wide range of disciplines, Ramsay, for example, founding the Select Society in 1754 with David Hume and Adam Smith.<sup>30</sup> Tytler was also a member of the Select Society.<sup>31</sup> Alexander Broadie, in his 2001 study of the Scottish

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<sup>24</sup> Robinson 2004, *James Beattie*.

<sup>25</sup> Mackay and Couper 2004, *William Tytler*.

<sup>26</sup> Couper 2004, *Pinkerton*.

<sup>27</sup> Forbes 1990, *Beattie and his Friends*, 21; Beattie 1776, *Essays*, 2.

<sup>28</sup> Broadie 2001, *Scottish Enlightenment*, 25.

<sup>29</sup> Pittock 2004, *Allan Ramsay*; Donaldson 2004, *David Herd*; Mackay and Couper 2004, *William Tytler*.

<sup>30</sup> Broadie 2001, *Scottish Enlightenment*, 26-28.

<sup>31</sup> Mackay and Couper 2004, *William Tytler*.

Enlightenment, notes that the membership of such societies was mainly drawn from the professional classes rather than aristocrats,<sup>32</sup> and in this respect the group of writers under consideration in this study were typical.

Many of these writers, then, working in similar professions, and moving in similar social circles, knew each other. Joseph Ritson, for example, although based south of the border, was acquainted with both John Leyden and David Herd. He also assisted Alexander Campbell with *Albyn's Anthology*.<sup>33</sup> Walter Scott was amongst those who helped Campbell, his former music teacher, to get financial support for the collection of material for *Albyn's Anthology*, and also contributed some of the new verses included in the publication.<sup>34</sup> In addition to supporting the work on *Albyn's Anthology*, Joseph Ritson assisted Walter Scott in the compilation of *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, and corresponded with David Herd regarding collection of material.<sup>35</sup> Walter Scott was friends with John Pinkerton, and also met Ramsay of Ochtertyre, as did Robert Burns.<sup>36</sup> Beattie, Tytler and Burns were all involved in the creation of Johnson's *Scots Musical Museum*.<sup>37</sup> Beattie advised George Thomson on his collection.<sup>38</sup>

The writers studied here were also connected by correspondence with a few pivotal figures who did not make significant interventions in the field of Scottish music history themselves, but who took great interest and may have acted as hubs in the exchange of ideas. Thomas Percy emerges as the most important figure, corresponding with Pinkerton, Tytler and Herd, via George Paton in the last case.<sup>39</sup>

Subscription lists show authors buying each other's books: for example, the subscribers to Beattie's collected essays of 1776 include Sir John Hawkins, Thomas Percy and William

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<sup>32</sup> Broadie 2001, *Scottish Enlightenment*, 29.

<sup>33</sup> McAulay 2009, *Our Ancient National Airs*, 72.

<sup>34</sup> Watt and Purser 2004, *Campbell, Alexander (1764-1824)*. Scott's authorship of some of the new verses is advertised on the title page of the anthology.

<sup>35</sup> Barczewski 2004, *Ritson; Hecht 1904, Songs from David Herd's Manuscripts*, 54.

<sup>36</sup> Couper 2004, *Pinkerton; Horn 2008, Ramsay, John, of Ochtertyre*.

<sup>37</sup> Johnson 2012, *Music*, 590.

<sup>38</sup> Robinson 2004, *James Beattie*, paragraph 8.

<sup>39</sup> Couper 2004, *Pinkerton; Mackay and Couper 2004, William Tytler; Hecht 1904, Songs from David Herd's Manuscripts*, 8-29.

Tytler. Beattie, Burney, Ramsay of Ochtertyre and Tytler were amongst the subscribers to McDonald's 1784 *A Collection of Highland Vocal Airs*.<sup>40</sup>

It was not just work in music history which linked these writers, many of them also wrote and published poetry. Pinkerton dedicated his early poem 'Craigmillar Castle, an Elegy' to James Beattie in acknowledgement of the role of Beattie's poem 'The Minstrel' in its composition.<sup>41</sup> Poetry by James Beattie was also set to music by Alexander Campbell.<sup>42</sup> A picture emerges of a relatively close-knit group of writers who were following similar professions, meeting each other at social clubs, corresponding, sharing songs and responding creatively to each other's work.

### 2.3.1. The History of Scots Songs and Ballads

Despite the differences in the types of publications in which writers covered Scottish music history their range of interests was relatively small. Writers were primarily interested in the purportedly historic nature of the type of song that had been published in *The Tea-Table Miscellany* and the body of song books it had spawned, to be referred to throughout this thesis as "Scots songs", and on ballads that were also seen as related.<sup>43</sup>

Ramsay's focus on domestic music-making was followed by many later collections: compilers aimed their collections at those who played the fashionable instruments of the day, as for example in the titles of James Oswald's *A Second Collection of Curious Scots Tunes for a Violin and German Flute with a Through Bass for the Harpsichord* of 1743 and *Watlens Collection of the most admired Scots Songs both ancient & modern, selected from*

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<sup>40</sup> McDonald 1784, *Highland Vocal Airs*, 16-22.

<sup>41</sup> Couper 2004, *Pinkerton*.

<sup>42</sup> Watt and Purser 2004, *Campbell, Alexander (1764-1824)*.

<sup>43</sup> Ramsay himself first uses "Scots songs" to refer to this repertoire in the title of his 1726 collaboration with Alexander Stuart, *Musick For Allan Ramsay's Collection of Scots Songs*. Thereafter the term is widely used, for example, in the title of Bremner's 1757 collection, cited earlier. The defining characteristics of "Scots songs" have been extensively discussed in the literature – see, for example: Johnson 2003, *Music and Society*, 132 on the features of the texts; and Fiske 1983, *Scotland in Music*, 13-14 and Gelbart 2002, "Folk Song" and "Art Music", 53-54 on the features of the music. Matthew Gelbart concludes that "there is so little consistency between these songs: more or less any tune could be "Scotch" if it claimed to be". This thesis will follow Gelbart's lead in not seeking to draw out defining features of "Scots songs", focussing instead on eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century writer's definitions where these become germane to the writing of Scottish music history.

*the best Authors ... Set for the voice, piano forte, flute or guitar* of 1793. The idea that collections could combine old and new material remained popular, among the examples of this are the 1776 publication *The Nightingale: A Collection of Ancient and Modern Songs, Scots and English*, which advertises the contents as ancient and modern in the title but does not indicate which songs are which in the text, and Robert Burns' 1799 collection *The Merry Muses of Caledonia : A Collection of Favourite Scots songs, Ancient and Modern* which similarly does not differentiate between ancient and modern songs in the body of the book. The enthusiasm for this repertoire amongst the elite is shown by its depiction in David Allan's 1780 painting *James Erskine, Lord Alva and his family*, in which Lord Alva and his wife look on as their three children play and sing the song 'Where Helen Lies' on harpsichord, 'cello and voice.<sup>44</sup>

In addition to their continued use by young ladies and gentlemen for domestic recreation, from the late 1760s, Scots songs attracted antiquarian attention. The idea that there were two different types of audience with different priorities appears to be foregrounded in the preface to David Herd's 1776 *Ancient and modern Scottish songs, heroic ballads, etc.* He opens the preface with the passage:

The common popular songs and national music, as they form a favourite entertainment of the Gay and the Cheerful [sic], seem likewise to merit some regard from the Speculative and Refined, in so far as they exhibit natural and striking traits of the character, genius, taste and pursuits of the people.<sup>45</sup>

Kinghorn and Law, in their 1970 study of Ramsay, describe Herd as an antiquarian editor, as does Nelson in her 2000 study,<sup>46</sup> so to some extent we could read his later comment that his collection had "...no higher aim than mere amusement" as a formulaic construction of self-deprecation. Yet when his comment further down the same page that "...the collection was not intended to be confined to the critical antiquarian, but devoted to the amusement of the public at large" is taken into account this can all be

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<sup>44</sup> Nelson 2000, *Tea-Table Miscellanies*, 599-600.

<sup>45</sup> Herd 1776, *Ancient and Modern Scottish Songs*, v.

<sup>46</sup> Kinghorn and Law 1970, *Works of Allan Ramsay*, 148; Nelson 2000, *Tea-Table Miscellanies*, 597.

read as an indicator of the perception that collections of songs could be engaged with in two quite different ways.<sup>47</sup>

Many of the writings on Scottish music history included in this study are attached to collections of songs with this more antiquarian bent. John Pinkerton's 1781 *Scottish Tragic Ballads* and his 1783 reissue in two volumes, *Select Scottish Ballads*, Patrick McDonald's 1784 *A Collection of Highland Vocal Airs*, Joseph Ritson's 1794 *Scottish Songs*, Alexander Campbell's 1816 *Albyn's Anthology*, and George Thomson's 1822 *Select Melodies of Scotland*, all discussed the music history of Scotland in the context of a published collection of songs. Walter Scott's 1801 *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* and William Motherwell's 1827 *Minstrelsy: Ancient and Modern* include historical discussion in the introductory material to collections of ballads, and William Dauney's 1838 *Ancient Scottish Melodies* includes a historical dissertation as part of the supporting commentary for the presentation of a historic manuscript which includes songs.

Many of the song and ballad collections, listed above, draw on the type of Scots songs published by Ramsay but approach it from a more antiquarian angle; they go far beyond simply stating that songs were "old" or "ancient" in the way that Ramsay had. Writers demonstrate their greater antiquarian focus in a variety of ways. Pinkerton, for example, places the material he presents in his 1783 *Select Scottish Ballads*, volume two, in the tradition following Ramsay when he remarks in his introductory writing that: "I must, however, observe that the genuine Old Songs, which were originally set to the most admired of the Scottish airs, are most of them unfortunately lost. For the present words to the greater part of them we are indebted to Allan Ramsay, and his friends...".<sup>48</sup> The "ballads" in his collection include 'Ewbuchts Marion', 'The yellow – hair'd Laddie', 'Bessy Bell and Mary Gray', and 'Owr the Bogie' which all appeared in the *Miscellany* in a form designed for domestic singing. Unlike Ramsay, however, Pinkerton's publications surround Scots songs and ballads with antiquarian apparatus in the form of introductory dissertations and essays, and/or historical notes to the songs. *Scottish Tragic Ballads* for

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<sup>47</sup> Herd 1776, *Ancient and Modern Scottish Songs*, vii-ix.

<sup>48</sup> Pinkerton 1783, *Select Scottish Ballads*, Vol. 2, xxvii-xxviii.

example begins with two dissertations: one ‘On the Oral Tradition of Poetry’, and the second ‘On the Tragic Ballad’. Out of a book of 166 pages, the two dissertations between them cover thirty pages, just under one fifth of the publication. This shows the importance of these dissertations to the overall conception of the work. After the main body of the ballads there is a section entitled simply ‘Fragments’. This is followed by extensive notes, which often take a single word or phrase and use explanation of its meaning as a springboard to a wider historical discussion. For example the note on the title of the first ballad, ‘Hardyknute’, explains that the name is of Danish origin and its meaning, this is followed by a comment on the Saxon origins of the names of Cunningham, which is in turn followed by the assertion of the common Gothic origins of the Norse and Saxon languages.<sup>49</sup> As a consequence of this, the notes to ‘Hardyknute’ run to twenty-seven pages, the ballad itself earlier in the publication having only run to thirty-four. Finally, the book concludes with a glossary.

Similarly, the first volume of Ritson’s 1794 *Scotish Songs*, many of the texts of which he cites as being from the *Miscellany*,<sup>50</sup> opens with a preface and then ‘A Historical Essay on Scotish Song’. This essay takes up 109 pages, over a quarter of the first volume. Ritson includes musical notation of the melodies of songs, but, unlike the publications of Oswald and Watlen, cited above, there are a number of indicators that Ritson did not intend his publication primarily for recreational singing. Firstly, Ritson notes that some of the melodies he had included were not the best available because he had different, antiquarian, priorities,

Some of these tunes no doubt, will be found very different from, and perhaps much inferior to, the common or favourite sets; but it may be depended upon that they are immediately taken from the oldest or best authorities that could be met with, and consequently are most likely to be the genuine and original airs; so far, at least, as musical notation can be relied [sic] on.<sup>51</sup>

Secondly, Ritson does not add bass lines to his collection. McAulay, writing in 2009, argues that the lack of bass lines suggests an antiquarian focus, since contemporary

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<sup>49</sup> Pinkerton 1781, *Scottish Tragic Ballads*, 87-88.

<sup>50</sup> Ritson 1794, *Scotish Song*, ii-iv.

<sup>51</sup> Ritson 1794, *Scotish Song*, vii.

writers such as Thomson and Johnson believed that accompaniments were important to help singers stay in tune and support those who did not know the tunes well. McAulay also compares Ritson's publication to the elaborate presentation of songs by contemporaries such as Corri and Urbani, clearly designed for recreational singing, to suggest a more antiquarian outlook.<sup>52</sup> McAulay's argument with regard to the significance of the lack of bass lines is strengthened by Ritson's justification of the lack of bass lines on the grounds of historical performance practice:

The base [sic] part, which seems to be considered as indispensable [sic] in modern musical publications would have been altogether improper in these volumes; the Scottish tunes are pure melody, which is not unfrequently injured by the bases, which have been set to them by strangers: the only kind of harmony known to the original composers consisting perhaps in the uniformant drone of the bagpipe.<sup>53</sup>

In addition, there are a number of songs to which Ritson simply supplies blank staves, - not very useful if the book was intended primarily for singing!<sup>54</sup> Ritson therefore represents the other end of the spectrum to works designed for domestic singing such as Ramsay's, presenting similar material, already well-known to his audience, but as an antiquarian curiosity.<sup>55</sup>

In addition to these writings which made use of the Scots songs presented by Ramsay and those who followed him, collecting of purportedly historic material from oral sources was a widespread trend amongst writers of Scottish music history. In 1769 David Herd had

<sup>52</sup> McAulay 2009, *Our Ancient National Airs*, 70. McAulay refers to the lack of bass lines to disagree with Bronson's earlier argument that Ritson's collection was intended for recreational purposes.

<sup>53</sup> Ritson 1794, *Scotish Song*, vii.

<sup>54</sup> See for example song XXIX 'I'll Never Love Thee More' and song XLV 'I'll Clear [sic] Up My Heart'. In the preface to the collection Ritson writes that blank staves have been left "Where a song is either known or presumed to have a tune, which it has been found impossible to procure, blank lines are left for its after insertion with the pen" (Ritson 1794, *Scotish Song*, vi). Given Ritson's suspicion of oral sources (see chapter 5) it seems unlikely that he sought to encourage the owners of his book to fill in versions they knew orally. It seems more likely that he left the blank staves to highlight a gap in the current knowledge of song, and perhaps to encourage further antiquarian work on the written and printed sources of song.

<sup>55</sup> *Scotish Songs* was published in London but widely cited in Scotland. It seems likely that audiences in both regions would have been familiar with the songs included: the Scotch songs by the London-based D'Urfey are likely to have been familiar to many readers, *Orpheus Caledonius* was published in London and provided tunes to much of the material from the first volume of *The Tea-Table Miscellany*, and at least eight editions of *The Tea-Table Miscellany* itself have been preserved in editions advertising that they were published or sold in London prior to the publication of *Scotish Songs* in 1794.

raised the idea that ancient material could be found from living sources in the preface to his collection *The ancient and Modern Scots Songs, Heroic Ballads, &c.*:

It is much to be regretted that the original words to many favourite tunes, once everywhere known, are now irrecoverably lost, excepting what are to be found in the memories of country people, there preserved by a fond attachment to these natural paintings.

Although Herd goes on to state that he had “recovered many of the original poems that gave rise to well-known tunes, and many fragments that appear of some antiquity”,<sup>56</sup> suggesting some engagement with the memories of the “country people”, the extended title of his collection focuses on the written sources of ancient material: “*The ancient and Modern Scots Songs, Heroic Ballads, &c. Now first Collected into one Body, from the various Miscellanies wherin they formerly lay dispersed. Containing Likewise, A great Number of Original Songs, from Manuscripts, never before published*”.

John Pinkerton, in his 1781 contribution to the history of Scottish poetry, *Scotish Tragic Ballads*, labelled five of his ballads as “From Tradition”, another three are described as having been compiled from various versions, including “common recitals”.<sup>57</sup> The other ballads are labelled as having been drawn from printed or manuscript sources. In his opening dissertation ‘On the Oral Tradition of Poetry’ Pinkerton had argued that poetry could be preserved by oral tradition through a number of mechanisms, including the setting of poetry to music.<sup>58</sup> Pinkerton’s work presents a more explicit statement of the idea that historic material could be found in oral tradition and could be presented in collections. There is a twist to this tale, however: the five ballads that Pinkerton labelled as “From Tradition” were actually of his own composition, a fraud exposed by Joseph Ritson in a 1784 letter to *The Gentlemen’s Magazine* and admitted by Pinkerton himself in 1786.<sup>59</sup> The fact that Pinkerton attempted to pass off his own compositions by labelling them as orally preserved historic material shows, however, the growing importance of

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<sup>56</sup> Herd 1769, *Ancient and Modern Scots Songs*, iv.

<sup>57</sup> Numbers XI, XII, XIII, XIV and XVI are labelled “From Tradition”. Number I, ‘Hardyknute’, number II, ‘Child Maurice’ and number VII, ‘Sir Patrick Spence’ are described as being compiled from a number of versions.

<sup>58</sup> Pinkerton 1781, *Scottish Tragic Ballads*, xviii.

<sup>59</sup> ANTI-SCOT 1784, *Letter to Mr. Pinkerton*, 812; Pinkerton 1786, *Ancient Scottish Poems*, Vol. 1, cxxvii-cxxxi.

the idea of the collection of material from oral sources in the writing of poetic and music history.

Pinkerton's collection did not trumpet the purportedly oral nature of some of its material on its title page, and just under half of the material was from published or manuscript sources. This contrasts with later collections which foreground the collected nature of their material. The 1784 collaboration between the McDonald brothers, Patrick and Joseph, and Ramsay of Ochtertyre, *A Collection of Highland Vocal Airs*, is a good example of this type of collection. In the introductory material Patrick McDonald emphasised the act of collecting the "monuments of antiquity" from living sources:

He made several journeys into Perthshire, and other parts of the Highlands, for the purpose of collecting the airs, that are sung in those districts, and that are not so generally known in Argyll shire: and from the singing, and the friendly communication of some respectable gentlemen and ladies, natives of the western isles, he has been enabled to enrich the collection, with a number of beautiful airs, that are, in some degree, peculiar to those counties.

He even mentioned his method of collecting later in the essay, writing that "He never thought his copy of an air accurate, until, upon playing it from his notes, the singer acknowledged, that it was, as nearly as he could judge, the very tune which he had sung".<sup>60</sup> The living nature of the sources is further emphasised by Ramsay of Ochtertyre's accompanying essay 'View of the Poetry and Music of the Highlanders', which discusses the material very much in the present tense. Ancient material could be found amongst contemporary Highlanders and collected for publication.

The act of collecting historic material from living sources became central to the definition of a number of publications which will be examined in this study: Sir Walter Scott's 1802 *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*; Richard Hartley Cromek's 1810 *Remains of Nithsdale and Galloway Song*; Alexander Campbell's 1816 and 1818 *Albyn's Anthology*; and William Motherwell's 1827 *Minstrelsy: Ancient and Modern*. In general the Highlands and Borders

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<sup>60</sup> McDonald 1784, *Highland Vocal Airs*, 2, 4.

were favoured sites for collectors, who often emphasised the location of their collecting activity in their titles or introductory material.

The type of individuals from whom the material was collected is often indicated in the notes to songs or ballads. That this was seen as a particular feature of this type of publication can be seen in its use by Allan Cunningham as a means of disguising his own authorship of many of the items included in *Remains of Nithsdale and Galloway Song*.<sup>61</sup> William Motherwell's *Minstrelsy: Ancient and Modern* took this to a whole new level, recording the circumstances of his collection in a new level of detail.<sup>62</sup>

Some of these collections were not simply designed to present music from a distant locale or social class to the elite metropolitan audience: publications such as *A Collection of Highland Vocal Airs* and *Albyn's Anthology* were also designed to sing from.

Harpsichord accompaniments are included for some of the songs in *A Collection of Highland Vocal Airs Albyn's Anthology*, a step McAulay argues was intended to boost sales,<sup>63</sup> presumably to those whose interest lay more in singing the material than its historical or antiquarian interest. Similarly, *Albyn's Anthology* was collected with an antiquarian purpose: the journeys Alexander Campbell took to collect the materials were funded by the Highland Society of Scotland<sup>64</sup> who laid down the types of information they wanted to accompany each item: 'collect unknown tunes and give them without improvement or alienation'; 'record any historical notes connected with the tune'; "note the location, informant and instrument upon which a tune was heard; and record the words that went with it."<sup>65</sup> These were the types of information which were typically presented in antiquarian publications. Yet, like McDonald, Campbell wrote accompaniments for the piano for the material included in *Albyn's Anthology*. McAulay notes that many of the people Campbell met on his travels were already playing such

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<sup>61</sup> For details see Read 2011, *R. H. Cromeck*.

<sup>62</sup> For details of Motherwell's recording activities see McCarthy 1990, *Ballad Matrix*.

<sup>63</sup> McAulay 2009, *Our Ancient National Airs*, 40.

<sup>64</sup> Campbell 1816, *Albyn's Anthology*, ix.

<sup>65</sup> Cited in McAulay 2009, *Our Ancient National Airs*, 101.

tunes on the piano, and so argues that to a certain extent Campbell was simply giving the audience of the book what it expected.<sup>66</sup>

Most of the writings on Scottish music history which were not attached to collections of song still focussed primarily on the antiquity of Scots songs and on the nature of ancient music and musical life that could be extrapolated from their texts and melodies. This can be seen by the naming of individual songs which also appear in collections designed for domestic singing or reference to the names of the collections themselves; reference to the debate about the origins of song with David Rizzio, James I or shepherds; and reference to the performance of songs by contemporary performers known to have specialised in the performance of song.

Alexander Campbell's 1798 *Introduction to the History of Poetry in Scotland*, as the title suggests, is heavily weighted towards the history of poetry. He does discuss the music history of Scotland, however, in his first two sections 'A conversation on Scotish song' and 'An account of Scotish song, as preserved in collections from the earliest to the present time'. As shown by the subtitles of the sections, the focus is very much on song. In 'A Conversation on Scotish Song' Campbell attempts to define "the primary scale of music" as "a general rule or criterion, by which we shall be enabled to adopt with safety, as genuine reliques of national song, and Scotish song in particular, such fragments of musical compositions, as are handed down to us from remote times".<sup>67</sup> He finishes the section with his character Alexis suggesting some songs "familiar to your ear" which Lycidas might play through in order to test his argument, amongst them 'Tweedside', 'The Lee Rigs', 'The Muckin o'Geordie's Byre', Saw ye nae my Peggie' and 'My Peggie is a young thing', all songs familiar from contemporary performing editions of the type of song published by Ramsay and his followers.<sup>68</sup>

Ramsay of Ochtertyre, in his 1791 essay 'On Scottish Songs', similarly shows that he was interested in the same type of song by naming songs which had been previously

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<sup>66</sup> McAulay 2009, *Our Ancient National Airs*, 116.

<sup>67</sup> Campbell 1798, *Introduction to History of Poetry*, 2.

<sup>68</sup> Campbell 1798, *Introduction to History of Poetry*, 7.

published. He names several songs that his readers might be surprised to discover absent from the Bannatyne and Maitland collections: ‘Hardyknute’ and ‘Flowers of the Forest’.<sup>69</sup> Later he credits Allan Ramsay with having rescued “a number of old songs” (207). He finishes his essay with a number of questions relating to song including some on the work of “Thomson the publisher of the *Orpheus Caledonius*” (209-210). From these references we can see that the songs that Ramsay of Ochtertyre was interested in were those canonised by Ramsay and his followers.

Like Campbell and Ramsay of Ochtertyre, Sir John Hawkins shows his focus on the type of song canonised by Ramsay and his followers by naming songs as examples. Hawkins notes that “There are many fine Scots airs in the collection of songs by the well-known Tom Durfey, intitled ‘Pills to purge Melancholy’”. He notes that some of these are considered “ancient”, and names ‘Katherine Ogie’, ‘Muirland Willy’, and ‘Cold and Raw’ as examples.<sup>70</sup> Hawkins’ main focus in his general history was to trace those responsible for the improvement in music over time, as a contribution to the debate concerning the relative merits of the ancients and moderns.<sup>71</sup> His discussion of the music of Scotland within this scheme focuses on the history of song.

Hawkins had earlier commented on the David Rizzio/James I debate,<sup>72</sup> and other writers who comment on the David Rizzio/James I/shepherds debate can also be understood to be primarily focussed on the history of Scots song: Lord Kames in his brief digression into the debate in his 1774 *Sketches of the History of Man* in which the James I ascription first appeared in print;<sup>73</sup> Charles Burney in his discussion of the rival claims of Rizzio and James I to have composed “national melodies”;<sup>74</sup> and James Beattie in his philosophical discussion of the peculiarities of national music in which he rejects both Rizzio and James

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<sup>69</sup> Runcole [John Ramsay of Ochtertyre] 1791, *On Scottish Songs*, 202.

<sup>70</sup> Hawkins 1776, *General History*, Vol. 4, 6. Subsequent references to this volume will appear in parentheses in the main text.

<sup>71</sup> For Hawkins’ own expression of his aims see Hawkins 1776, *General History* Vol. 1, ‘Preliminary Discourse’. Allen 1962, *Philosophies of Music History*, 73.

<sup>72</sup> Hawkins 1776, *General History*, Vol. 4, 3-5.

<sup>73</sup> Home 1774, *Sketches*, 166-167.

<sup>74</sup> Burney 1776, *General History*, Vol. 3, 219-220.

I and suggests that “real shepherds” composed “Scotch music” and “Scotch songs”. Beattie also names the frequently published song ‘The Broom of Cowdenknows’.<sup>75</sup>

Ramsay of Ochtertyre not only named songs and collections in his essay ‘On Scottish Songs’, he also, in his concluding list of questions asks about the whereabouts of the manuscripts of “Oswald the musician”.<sup>76</sup> This suggests a further indicator that song was the main focus of a writing on Scottish music. Benjamin Franklin’s somewhat ambiguous references to “songs” and “tunes” can be understood as those associated with the song published by Ramsay and his followers when he writes towards the end of his letter to Lord Kames: “Whoever has heard James Oswald play them on his Violoncello, will be less inclin’d to dispute this with me”.<sup>77</sup> As we saw above, Oswald was responsible for perpetuating the Rizzio attributions, and was also a noted cellist.<sup>78</sup>

Although none of the publications discussed above were connected with collections of songs, and although few writers name individual songs or collections, we can see by the prevalence of the Rizzio/James I/shepherds debate and the references to Oswald as a performer that in the writing of Scottish music history the history of Scots songs formed the dominant part.

In summary, across the types of writing in which ideas about Scottish music history appeared in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries - prefaces to collections for singing, dissertations and notes to antiquarian collections, histories of poetry, writings on human nature, general histories of music, and essays on song – the primary subject of interest was Scots songs. The contemporary metropolitan elite enjoyed singing and playing such songs in their homes. At the same time, further Scots songs and ballads were sought by collectors amongst the rural poor. Scottish music historians then were writing the history of a type of song that they perceived as being currently sung and played across the social spectrum and geographical area of eighteenth-century Scotland.

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<sup>75</sup> Beattie 1776, *Essays*, 483-485.

<sup>76</sup> Runcole [John Ramsay of Ochtertyre] 1791, *On Scottish Songs*, 209-210.

<sup>77</sup> Franklin 1765, *To Lord Kames*.

<sup>78</sup> Wagstaff 2004, *James Oswald*.

This idea was crucial to their perceptions of the ancient nature of Scots song, as will be discussed in later chapters.

The pervasive nature of the focus on Scots song and balladry is thrown further into relief by the few occasions on which sacred music is discussed; sacred music either occupies a marginal position in accounts, or, is itself harnessed to the history of secular Scots song and balladry. Hawkins probably covers the most wide range of topics within Scottish music history, but the balance is heavily weighted towards songs: he discusses song for seven pages in volume four alone, for example, whilst his most extensive comments on church music, in the reign of James IV, take up one paragraph, and on the theorist Simon Tailler he writes only four lines worth.<sup>79</sup> Tytler's most lengthy treatment of sacred music is harnessed to his main interest in secular song; he discusses the alteration of Lowland songs for sacred purposes at the Reformation.<sup>80</sup> Simon Tailler is mentioned again by John Pinkerton in *Ancient Scotish Poems*, in his argument that twelfth-century church music in Scotland must have been in an advanced state, but again his comments are merely passing.<sup>81</sup>

This focus on the history song to the exclusion of all other forms of music may be illuminated by two comments made by Ritson and Campbell in the 1790s. In his 1794 historical essay Ritson discusses the idea that James I had composed, cultivated or invented Scottish music, an idea that had become widespread. Ritson rejects the idea, “unless, by *national*, we are to understand *cathedral* music, to which he certainly appears to have paid great attention”. Ritson goes on to argue that James I’s interest in cathedral music, “will by no means prove that he was a cultivator, or even admirer of what we now mean by Scotish music”.<sup>82</sup>

The second comment is from Campbell’s 1798 ‘Conversation on Scotish Song’:

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<sup>79</sup> Hawkins 1776, *General History*, Vol. 4, 1-7, 10; Vol. 2, 41.

<sup>80</sup> Tytler 1779, *Dissertation*, 635-637

<sup>81</sup> Pinkerton 1786, *Ancient Scotish Poems*, Vol. 1, lxvi-lxvii.

<sup>82</sup> Ritson 1794, *Scotish Song*, xcvi-xcvii.

Once for all, it is here necessary to define what strictly characterizes Scotish song. When such melodies as we have already defined, are chaunted to verses in the various dialects of the Lowlands of Scotland, descriptive of the manners, sentiments, and occupations of the people, we cannot admit any other into the description of Scotish song: of consequence, the writings of Sir David Lindsay, Gawin Douglas, Captain Alexander Montgomery and others, who imitated the Italian poets of the time, do not belong to this part of our subject.<sup>83</sup>

These two quotes show, firstly, in the comments of Ritson, a sense that Scots song had become synonymous with the idea of Scottish music. Secondly, in the comments of Campbell, the idea that Scottish song was that which was distinctive to Scotland, excluding songs written in Scotland by Scots which shared the characteristics of songs of other countries.

These perceptions from the 1790s are mirrored in Dauney's 1838 comments. As part of his historical discussion, Dauney spends five pages discussing the music of the Chapel Royal. Like the writers discussed above, however, this discussion, whilst lengthy, is subservient to a discussion about secular song. The discussion is triggered by a document entitled 'Information touching the Chappell-Royall of Scotland' dating to 1631, which Dauney refers to in order to show that "it distinctly appears that the Scotish music most highly appreciated at that time was not the composition of that age, but of a period long anterior to it". The passage in the document that Dauney is interested in reads, in Dauney's citation:

Your majestie appointed mee ane chamber within your palace of Halryude-house, wherein I have provided and sett upp an organe, two flutes, two pandores, with viols and other instruments, with all sorts of English, Frech, Dutch, Spaynish, Latine, Italian, and OLD SCOTCH MUSICK, vocall and instrumentall.

Dauney concludes that:

There can be no doubt that this last expression referred to the popular national music of Scotland. That sacred music was here not meant is sufficiently obvious; the metrical psalmody of the Reformed Scotish Church

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<sup>83</sup> Campbell 1798, *Introduction to History of Poetry*, 9.

was not *old*, and the music of the church in Scotland was identical with that of Rome, and therefore not *Scotish*.<sup>84</sup>

Whilst these three writers, Ritson, Campbell and Dauney, represent only a small fraction of the writers studied, they are amongst those who cover Scottish music history in greatest depth. For this reason it seems possible to extrapolate from their comments and suggest that one reason for the focus on the history of Scots song is that writers were primarily interested in the history of music that they perceived made their country distinctive, the music that, by the nineteenth century, had come to be called “national song”.<sup>85</sup> Song was not the only music that was perceived to be distinctively Scottish, and so it seems likely that other, unacknowledged, factors were also in play:

The passage that Dauney cites refers to both “vocall and instrumentall” music, yet Dauney ignores the reference to instrumental music and focusses on the vocal instead. It is possible that the focus on song may reflect a perception that song was the oldest type of music: lying at the primitive roots of both music and speech , although this is neither confirmed nor denied by the sources examined in this study.<sup>86</sup>

Scots songs and ballads were not only interesting to eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century writers because they were seen as examples of ancient music, further information about ancient music, such as who had composed it and what type of instruments had been used to play it, could be gleaned from analysis of song texts and melodies. Song texts could be used to add colour to the pictures of the lives of historic personages and historic events. As we will see in subsequent chapters, the antiquity of Scots songs and ballads was often underpinned by little else than a sense that they exhibited the features that contemporary thinkers perceived as characteristic of historic

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<sup>84</sup> Dauney 1838, *Ancient Scotish Melodies*, 155-159.

<sup>85</sup> See, for example, Thomson 1822, *Select Melodies of Scotland*.

<sup>86</sup> The idea that speech began as song appears in Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Essai sur l’Origine des Langues*: “Since our natural voices are inarticulate, words would have few articulations; a few interspersed consonants eliminating the hiatus between vowels would suffice to make them fluid and easy to pronounce. On the other hand its sounds would be extremely varied, and variety of accent would multiply the same voices; Quantity, rhythm would make possible still further combinations; so that since voices, sounds, accent, quantity, which are by nature, would leave little to be done by articulations, which are by convention, men would sing rather than speak” (ch. 4) Translation from Gourevitch 1997, *Rousseau*, 255.

material, and, yet, it was from these features that further ideas about the music of the past were extrapolated. The key themes in the histories of Scots songs and ballads written between 1770 and 1838 will now be outlined in turn.

### 2.3.2. Origins

Ideas about the origins of Scots songs are discussed in detail by Matthew Gelbart in his 2007 publication *The Invention of "Folk Music" and "Art Music"*, and so the main arguments will be summarised here.<sup>87</sup> George Thomson's 1725 ascription of some Scots songs to David Rizzio has already been discussed. The backlash against the idea, which began following Oswald's 1743 collection, continued into the late eighteenth century. Discussions of the other possible composers or inventors of Scots song often began by rejecting Rizzio. In his place either James I or "real shepherds" were proposed.

In 1774 Lord Kames suggested that James I was the composer of Scots songs. Kames presented the testimony of one Alessandro Tassoni, translated by himself as:

We may reckon among the composers of the moderns, James King of Scotland, who not only composed sacred songs, but was himself the *inventor* of a new style of music, plaintive and pathetic, different from all others. In this manner of composition he has been imitated in our times by Carlo Gesualdo Prince of Venosa, who has illustrated that style of music with new and wonderful invention.

Kames reasoned that the James mentioned in the passage must have been James I since he was "the only one of our kings who seems to have had any remarkable taste in the fine arts".<sup>88</sup>

Lord Kames' comments appeared in his 1774 publication *Sketches of the history of Man*. The purpose of this publication was not to discuss music history, rather it was to attempt to explain human nature using the history of man as a source. In fact, Kames notes that his discussion of the history of music will be brief:

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<sup>87</sup> See Gelbart 2007, *The Invention of "Folk" and "Art" Music*, chapter 1 and chapter 3.

<sup>88</sup> Home 1774, *Sketches*, 166-167. Subsequent references to this publication will appear in parentheses in the main text.

Such sketches of the history of man as tend the most to explain his nature, are chiefly insisted on in this work. The history of music is entertaining, that branch especially which compares ancient and modern music; and accordingly I have occasionally handled that branch above. The other branches fall not properly within my plan; because they seem to afford little opening into human nature (166).

Kames aimed his work neither at the learned, nor at the “vulgar”, but “It is intended for men, who, equally removed from the corruption of opulence, and from the depression of bodily labour, are bent on useful knowledge;” Kames seems to reiterate this point when he notes in his note ‘To the Reader’ that he has included English translations throughout because he wanted the work to be popular, and particularly so for the “female sex” (v, vii).

Kames opened up the debate about the origins of Scottish music in 1774 by introducing the idea that James I was the originator in an incidental comment in a publication which did not treat music extensively.

A further element was thrown into the debate on the origins of Scottish music with the publication of a selection of James Beattie’s essays including ‘On poetry and music, as they affect the Mind’ in 1776. Beattie made the revolutionary suggestion that:

But though I admit Tassoni’s testimony as a proof, that the Scotch music is more ancient than Rizzio, I do not think him right in what he says of its inventor. Nor can I acquiesce in the opinion of those who give the honour of this invention to the monks of Melrose. I rather believe, that it took its rise among men who were real shepherds, and who actually felt the sentiments and affections, whereof it is so very expressive.<sup>89</sup>

Like Kames’ comments, Beattie’s remarks on this aspect of Scottish music history appear in an essay which is largely dedicated to a more philosophical subject; in this case the means by which poetry and music have their effect on the mind, demonstrated by reference to the differences between Highland and Lowland music. Beattie was not a music historian, or even a historian, he was a philosopher.

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<sup>89</sup> Beattie 1776, *Essays*, 485.

The contenders for the role of composer of Scots songs, then, were David Rizzio, James I and real shepherds. With these elements in place the debate continued to rumble on throughout the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century. In the ‘Preliminary Discourse’ to his 1776 *General History*, John Hawkins justifies the need for such a general history. Hawkins argues that a number of errors have crept into music histories, one of which is the attribution of Scottish music to David Rizzio.<sup>90</sup> His most extensive discussion of the debate comes at the beginning of volume four in which he portrays a geographically isolated people propagating melodies by tradition until the reign of James I who wrote compositions as good as those of the best composers of the time. Hawkins dismisses the claims of David Rizzio, arguing that Rizzio would not have had the time to write music in the two busy years he spent in Scotland.<sup>91</sup> Charles Burney briefly touches on the debate in the third volume of his *A General History of Music*, published in 1789, noting that he “had long been extremely desirous of tracing the peculiarities of the national melodies of Scotland, from a higher source than David Rizzio”. Burney implicitly accepts the claim of James I to have composed the melodies, although his main focus is on the claim that James I influenced Tassoni, an idea he rejects.<sup>92</sup> William Tytler, John Pinkerton, Joseph Ritson, Alexander Campbell and William Dauney all engage in the debate, throughout the eighteenth and into the nineteenth centuries.

Gelbart characterises Beattie’s 1776 argument that real shepherds had composed songs as a turning point in the development of the concepts of “art” and “folk” music,<sup>93</sup> but in terms of the writing of music history the debate continued to be important for at least sixty years afterwards.

### 2.3.3. Scale Types

Another trend in the writing of Scottish music history from the later eighteenth century was the identification of typical ancient scale types. The key writers and moments in the debate have been outlined by Gelbart in his chapter ‘The invention of folk modality, 1775-

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<sup>90</sup> Hawkins 1776, *General History*, Vol. 1, xvi.

<sup>91</sup> Hawkins 1776, *General History* Vol. 4, 3-5.

<sup>92</sup> Burney 1776, *General History*, Vol. 3, 219-220.

<sup>93</sup> Gelbart 2007, *The Invention of "Folk" and "Art" Music*, 90-91, 98.

1840'. To briefly summarise the debate here, however: in a 1765 letter to Lord Kames Benjamin Franklin had argued that "Scotch tunes" made almost exclusive use of the concords of the third, fifth and octave on "emphatical notes", as a result of their composition by ancient minstrels on harps "of the most simple kind, I mean a Harp without any Half Notes but those in the natural Scale, and with no more than two Octaves of Strings from C to C" and with no means of stopping the sound of the strings between notes.<sup>94</sup> Although this was a private letter, parts of it were later reprinted in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* in 1781,<sup>95</sup> and for this reason it forms one of the sources for this study.

The idea that ancient song did not have any chromatic notes was also held by Sir John Hawkins: "The ancient Scotch tunes seem to consist of the pure diatonic intervals, without any intermixture of those chromatic notes, as they are called". Hawkins also noted that:

the distinguishing characteristic of the Scots music is the frequent and uniform iteration of the concords, more especially the third on the accented part of the bar, to the almost total exclusion of the second and seventh; of which latter interval it may be remarked, that it occurs seldom as a semitone, even where it precedes a cadence<sup>96</sup>

showing the same focus on the use of the concords noted by Franklin.

The account which most seems to have caught the attention of later writers, however, was that of Charles Burney. Burney's comments on the scale type of Scottish music appear in his discussion of the music of the ancients, right at the beginning of his history. The main focus of his discussion is the music of the ancient Greeks. Burney uses the writings of Plutarch to outline the 'Old Enharmonic' scale of the Greeks and presents his example in staff notation as a scale of D minor with the G and C♯ missing. Following this he states "Now this is exactly the old Scots scale in the minor key". He follows this with a brief discussion of old Chinese music concluding that all of the melodies available missed

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<sup>94</sup> Franklin 1765, *To Lord Kames*, paragraph 4.

<sup>95</sup> No author 1781, *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 3-4.

<sup>96</sup> Hawkins 1776, *General History* Vol. 4, 4 fn.

the fourth and seventh of the key. He concludes that “Now no music can be composed from such a scale that will not remind us of the melody of Scotland, which will hereafter be proved of a much higher antiquity than has generally been imagined”.<sup>97</sup> The parts of Burney’s discussion that caught the attention of later writers are his delineation of a scale perceived as “lacking” certain degrees, and his cross-cultural comparison with other purportedly ancient music. Further discussions drawing on the work of Burney appeared in the writings of Alexander Campbell, William Thomson and William Dauney, all of which have been summarised by Gelbart. Similar discussions of scalic characteristics which did not clearly draw on Burney’s writing appeared in the work of William Tytler and the work of Patrick McDonald and Ramsay of Ochtertyre.<sup>98</sup>

The discussion of scale types was a key element in Scottish musical historical writing throughout the period in question: many writers saw identification of the scale type as the means to identify that music which was really ancient from that which was more modern, and as a means to identify the types of instruments which might have been used in the past. The application of ideas about scale types in these ways can be seen particularly clearly in William Tytler’s ‘A Dissertation on the Scottish Musick’, first published anonymously as an appendix to Hugo Arnot’s *The History of Edinburgh* in 1779. The main focus of Tytler’s ‘Dissertation’ is to assign Scots songs well-known to his audience to different historical periods, extending from prior to the reign of James I to the eighteenth century, based on their use of different degrees of the scale. He suggests that the songs of his earliest period “must have been composed for a very simple instrument, such, perhaps, as the shepherd’s pipe, of few notes, and of the plain diatonick scale, without using the semitones, or sharps and flats”.<sup>99</sup> Similar use of these ideas appears in George Thomson’s 1822 *Select Melodies of Scotland*.

### 2.3.4. Bards and Minstrels

The key players in Franklin’s 1765 discussion of the nature of “old Scotch tunes”, outlined in the previous section, were the minstrels, composing and performing songs to the

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<sup>97</sup> Burney 1776, *General History*, Vol. 1, 37-38.

<sup>98</sup> Gelbart 2007, *The Invention of "Folk" and "Art" Music*, chapter 4.

<sup>99</sup> Tytler 1779, *Dissertation*, 625. Tytler’s work is discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

accompaniment of their harps. The professional performers, and sometimes composers, of historic music form another important strand in the writing of Scottish music history from the 1760s onwards. Broadly speaking, a distinction is maintained between the professional musicians of the Lowlands and Borders, and the professional musicians of the Highlands. The professional musicians of the Highlands are almost invariably referred to as “bards”. In many cases, the term “minstrel” is used in accounts of Lowland and Border music. In some instances “bard” is also used in conjunction with Lowland and Border music, although this does not seem to have connoted the same type of musician as the Highland bard. Some writers identify a difference in status between the two types of musician, although different writers hold conflicting ideas about whether the bard or the minstrel was the higher status musician. Bards and minstrels appear as part of narratives about the relative sophistication, or, sometimes, lack of sophistication, of Scottish music of the past. They often also appear as part of a narrative of a golden age followed by decline. Bards and/or minstrels often hold a key place in perceptions of Scottish music history, but, as we shall see, perceptions of the precise nature of their roles and a standard use of the terminology were not fixed during the period in question.

In 1762 James Macpherson had published *Fingal*, the second of his works attributed to the third-century bard Ossian. In his introductory material Macpherson presents the bard as a vital part of ancient, oral, Caledonian society: the bard’s songs inspired the people to virtue, who then, in turn, inspired further songs.<sup>100</sup> In 1765 Thomas Percy published his *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* in response to Macpherson’s Ossianic publications. In contrast to the orally preserved bardic past presented by Macpherson, Percy depicted the work of a vanished minstrel class preserved in documents. Although Percy’s work focussed primarily on England, his ideas about minstrels were influential in Scotland.<sup>101</sup> Percy’s work was directly cited by William Motherwell in his 1827 discussion of the role of minstrels in the composition of Border ballads, and by William Dauney in his 1838

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<sup>100</sup> Stafford 1988, *Sublime Savage*, 155-156.

<sup>101</sup> Percy does include some songs that he identifies as Scottish, but as a proportion of the overall work they are negligible. The songs are: ‘The Jew’s Daughter’ and ‘Edward, Edward’ in volume 1; ‘Hardyknute’ and ‘Young Waters’ in volume 2; and ‘Gil morice’ in volume 3.

discussion of minstrels.<sup>102</sup> Percy's work inspired James Beattie to write his poem 'The Minstrel', later cited by William Tytler to evoke the atmosphere of minstrelsy in his 1783 'Dissertation on the Scottish Music'.<sup>103</sup>

Macpherson and Percy seem to set up between them a dichotomy between the Gaelic bard on the one hand and the Gothic minstrel on the other, and to some extent this division does appear in writings on Scottish music history. John Leyden, in his 'Preliminary Dissertation' to his 1801 edition of the sixteenth-century *The Complaynt of Scotland*, provides a typical example. He opens his discussion of the professional musicians of the Lowlands with the statement that "the state of the Minstrels in the Scottish Lowlands, has been left in great obscurity", which contrasts with the statement that opens his discussion of the musicians of the Gaels: "Among the Irish, and their descendants the Gaël of Scotland, the system of Bardism was closely interwoven with the manners and habits of the people, and has disappeared only at a very late period". In these passages he maintains the difference between the Lowland minstrel and the Highland bard set up by Macpherson and Percy. Within his subsection on the minstrels of the Lowlands, however, he refers to the appearance of a bard in *Cockelbie Sow* and to Dunbar having pretensions to "the character of minstrel or bard".<sup>104</sup> Leyden is typical in terms of the porosity of the use of the terms.

Despite this lack of clarity, a difference does seem to have been perceived between Highland and Lowland musicians. Lowland musicians are depicted as the composers of Scots songs and ballads, as depicted by Benjamin Franklin. Tytler, in his 1779 'Dissertation on the Scottish Musick', for example, attributes named songs to minstrels:

To these sylvan minstrels, I imagine, we owe many fine old songs, which are more regular and varied in their melody as they come nearer to modern times, though still retaining their 'Native wood-notes wild,' such as Busk ye, busk ye – Waly, waly...<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Motherwell 1827, *Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern*, xxviii; Dauney 1838, *Ancient Scottish Melodies*, 68-71.

<sup>103</sup> Beattie 1771, *Minstrel*, v; Tytler 1783, *Poetical Remains*, 222.

<sup>104</sup> Leyden 1801, *Complaynt*, 249-251.

<sup>105</sup> Tytler 1779, *Dissertation*, 633.

The importance of the question to the field as a whole can be seen by Sir Walter Scott's comment that he will not discuss the question:

Whether they were originally the composition of minstrels, professing the joint arts of poetry and music; or whether they were the occasional effusions of some self-taught bard; is a question into which I do not here mean to enquire.<sup>106</sup>

John Pinkerton in 1781, William Thomson in 1822, and William Motherwell in 1827 all attribute Lowland and Border songs or ballads to the bards or minstrels of the past.<sup>107</sup>

A related yet distinct point of view is expressed by Pinkerton in his 1786 publication. In 1786 Pinkerton presents a slightly different view to that expressed in his 1781 article. Rather than stating that bards composed the songs known to his audience, he presents the bards and minstrels of the past as composing early songs exhibiting the distinctive characteristics of Scottish music: "The music of these Pictish, or Scoto-Pictish, songs and ballads, perhaps, presented early specimens of that exquisite expression, and simple melody, now so deservedly admired in Scottish music".<sup>108</sup> A lone dissenting voice appears in the person of Ramsay of Ochtertyre, who, in his 1791 article 'On Scottish Songs', argues that the pastoral songs known to his audience could not have been composed by Border minstrels, since "The fragments of their compositions that have been transmitted to us, breathe a rugged spirit, well suited to a people whose trade was arms, and whose love-tales were sometimes connected with family feuds". Rather, he argues that "the sweetest and most beautiful tunes, were at least clothed with new words, after the union of the crowns, when there was no longer any thing to fear from enemies foreign or domestic".<sup>109</sup>

Those writers who differentiate between the Lowlands and Highlands tend to present Highland bards, in contrast, as an adjunct to chiefly households, responsible for singing

<sup>106</sup> Scott 1802, *Minstrelsy*, c.

<sup>107</sup> Pinkerton 1781, *Scottish Tragic Ballads*, xx; Thomson 1822, *Select Melodies of Scotland*, 15-17; Motherwell 1827, *Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern*, xxviii.

<sup>108</sup> Pinkerton 1786, *Ancient Scotch Poems*, Vol. 1, lxvi.

<sup>109</sup> Runcole [John Ramsay of Ochtertyre] 1791, *On Scottish Songs*, 203-204.

the genealogies and praises of their employers, rather than composing songs and ballads.<sup>110</sup> Both Macpherson and Ramsay of Ochtertyre argue for the origins of Highland bards in the druids, Ramsay of Ochtertyre stating that: “It seems, however, highly probable, that both the Scottish and Irish bards of the middle ages were the successors of the Druidical ones, who, upon the fall of that hierarchy, were spared by general consent”.<sup>111</sup> Leyden disagrees with Macpherson and Ramsay of Ochtertyre: “For the original establishment of the Minstrels or Bards, among the Celtic tribes of Ireland, Scotland, Man, Wales, Cornwall, and Armorica, it is needless to have recourse to the institutions of Druidism”.<sup>112</sup> This comment by Leyden, however, highlights another common aspect of discussions of Gaelic bardism in particular, the portrayal of an ancient and geographically widespread common practice. Macpherson’s bard was portrayed as the Scottish equivalent of Homer, a link to classical antiquity also presented by Pinkerton in 1781.<sup>113</sup>

Lowland musicians then were widely portrayed as the composers and performers of Lowland and Border Scots songs and ballads. Highland musicians, on the other hand, sang the genealogies and praises of their chiefs, may have been the descendants of druids, and were part of a widespread ancient practice.

Despite the general porosity in the use of the terms “bard” and “minstrel”, a number of writers do make a distinction between bards and minstrels in terms of status, although once again, little consensus is reached between writers. John Pinkerton, for example, in his 1786 ‘An Essay on the Origin of Scotish Poetry’ which prefaces his *Ancient Scotish Poems* distinguishes between bards and minstrels in terms of status:

The poor bards, who entertained the mob, might recite ballads and short romances in the vulgar tongue; but the minstrels, who appeared in the king’s,

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<sup>110</sup> Examples can be seen in Tytler 1779, *Dissertation*, 633; [John Ramsay of Ochtertyre] 1784, *Influence of Poetry and Music*, 9.

<sup>111</sup> MacPherson 1762, *Fingal*, x; [John Ramsay of Ochtertyre] 1784, *Influence of Poetry and Music*, 10. MacPherson 1762, *Fingal*

<sup>112</sup> Leyden 1801, *Complaynt*, 254.

<sup>113</sup> For an example of the parallels drawn between Ossian and Homer see Blair 1765, *Critical Dissertation*. Pinkerton 1781, *Scottish Tragic Ballads*, xi-xvii.

or in the baron's hall, would use French only, for, had they tried the common language, they would have been sent into the kitchen.<sup>114</sup>

This distinction is maintained further on in the text, when Pinkerton writes of minstrels that,

...these men were first in the highest reverence: the superior ones reciting to the great and the polite their own compositions, or those of other poets in the French language, till about the Fourteenth century, when they began to use the common tongue; while the inferior order called *bards* entertained the others (lxxiii).

This piece of text is accompanied by a footnote which cautions that,

The reader must carefully distinguish between *minstrels* and *bards*. The latter as early as 1458, are in the Scottish Acts of Parliament ranked with gypsies, fornars, beggars, and feigned fools. But, in 1474, minstrels are ranked with knights and heralds, and such as could spend 100 pounds a year land-rent; and are allowed to wear silk apparel (lxiii fn.).

William Tytler, in the 1783 version of his 'Dissertation on the Scottish Music' similarly distinguishes between bards and minstrels, but presents the bards as the high status musicians and the minstrels as low status. His distinction is based on the mode of employment of the two groups: Tytler's bards were attached to the household of a chief or head of a clan where their function was to sing the feats of the chief's ancestors at solemn events and festivities; minstrels on the other hand were "itinerant" or "strolling".<sup>115</sup>

The examples given above show that, although some writers on Scottish music history distinguished, with varying degrees of consistency, between bards and minstrels, the two types of musician were seen as related. For this reason, and because of the degree of porosity in the labelling, perceptions of both bards and minstrels in Scottish music histories will be considered together in the rest of this section. It should also be noted that the terms "bard" and "minstrel" appear to be used by some writers, such as Sir

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<sup>114</sup> Pinkerton 1786, *Ancient Scottish Poems*, Vol. 1, lxvi. Subsequent references to this publication will be given in parentheses in the text.

<sup>115</sup> Tytler 1779, *Dissertation*, 633.

Walter Scott in his 1802 *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, as a shorthand for poets and/or musicians in general, rather than as an indicator of a specific profession.<sup>116</sup> These uses of the terms will not be discussed here.

The majority of those writers who depict bards or minstrels in their writings depict them as harpers. The performance on the harp is at the centre of Franklin's argument, and Tytler, Pinkerton, Scott and Thomson also all present harpers.<sup>117</sup>

Those writers who portray bards or minstrels as the composers of songs or ballads often present these poet-musicians as part of a narrative about the relative sophistication of song/balladry at different points in history. Franklin, for example, uses the structure of the minstrels' harps to account for what he sees as the characteristic simplicity and lack of artifice of Scots tunes. Similar perceptions were held by Dauney.<sup>118</sup> This contrasts with the narratives of Tytler and Thomson, both of whom present minstrels as responsible for increasing the artifice of historic song, although within certain limits.

Thomson, for example disagrees with Franklin's idea that the oldest tunes could be ascribed to minstrels:

That Minstrels, who were generally harpers, and sometimes sung with the instrument, were formerly common in the Lowlands of Scotland, admits of no doubt: and that many of our more regular melodies may have been composed by them, is not improbable: but that our oldest simple melodies were the production of an age anterior to the existence of performers on the harp in the Lowlands, appears beyond a doubt.<sup>119</sup>

Instead, he argues that:

While we, therefore, are very much inclined to believe, with Mr Ritson and Dr Beattie, that the Lowland melodies originates among the pastoral inhabitants

<sup>116</sup> See for example Scott 1802, *Minstrelsy*, xci, xcvi, ci.

<sup>117</sup> Franklin 1765, *To Lord Kames*; No author 1781, *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 4; Tytler 1779, *Dissertation*, 633; Pinkerton 1781, *Scottish Tragic Ballads*, xvi-xviii; Scott 1802, *Minstrelsy*, xcv, cviii; Thomson 1822, *Select Melodies of Scotland*, 15.

<sup>118</sup> Dauney 1838, *Ancient Scottish Melodies*, 71-72.

<sup>119</sup> Thomson 1822, *Select Melodies of Scotland*, 15. Subsequent references to this publication will appear in parentheses in the text.

of the country; yet, we are also disposed to think, that many of the more artificial and less ancient melodies may have been produced by the minstrels or harpers,-and thus far only can we agree with Dr Franklin (17).

For Thomson, then, in this case minstrels brought increasing sophistication in their increasing artifice.

Like Tytler, Thomson attempted to create a chronological framework of musical features by which to judge the age of melodies. He perceived the use of the fourth and seventh degree of the scale as indicators of later, increasingly refined, compositions. Thomson, however, had to deviate from his own methodology in order to include the tunes ‘Waly Waly’, ‘The Flowers of the Forest’ and ‘Lochaber’ amongst the earliest tunes, since each of these, according to Thomson, include the flat seventh. In order to account for these Thomson writes,

There is something, however, so natural and pleasing in sliding from the sixth to the flat seventh, while it has such a melancholy and *sighing* expression, that a minstrel of more than ordinary refinement and feeling may easily have hit upon it, in a moment of inspiration, even at a very early period of the art (7).

So Thomson believed that minstrels could have made Scottish music of the past less artless but implicit in his explanation is the idea that in the overall scheme of music history minstrels lacked sophistication.

Bards and minstrels are often woven into a narrative of a golden age followed by a period of decline, followed by their complete extinction. This is commonly supported by reference to laws prohibiting or circumscribing the activities of bards or minstrels. Ramsay of Ochtertyre again provides a good example, using an Act of Parliament of 1579 to argue that “The minstrels, whose metrical tales used once to rouse the borderers like the trumpet’s sound, were now discouraged, and classed with rogues and vagabonds”. He ties this decline into the decline of chivalry, as Pinkerton had in 1786.<sup>120</sup> Ramsay of Ochtertyre uses the same Act to account for the decline of the importance of bards in the

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<sup>120</sup> Runcole [John Ramsay of Ochtertyre] 1791, *On Scottish Songs*, 204-205; Pinkerton 1786, *Ancient Scottish Poems*, Vol. 1, lxxiii.

Highlands in his 1784 essay ‘Of the Influence of Poetry and Music upon the Highlanders’. In this essay, however, Ramsay of Ochtertyre ties the decline of the bards to the increasing adherence of the Highland nobility to the fashion of the court.<sup>121</sup> Leyden uses the presence of the Gaelic bard at the coronation of Alexander III to argue that bards in the past had higher status than later.<sup>122</sup> Alexander Campbell strikes a typically apocalyptic note in his 1798 publication writing that: “The decay of genuine taste for ancient song among the Highlanders is rapidly advancing. Those who caught the dying voice of the last bards are themselves droping [sic] away, and soon; very soon the tales of other times will be heard no more”.<sup>123</sup>

In summary, bards and minstrels make frequent appearances in accounts of Scottish music history written after 1770. Some writers distinguish between the two terms, suggesting differing geographical origins, statuses or modes of employment, but this is far from consistently applied. Although the pictures of bards and minstrels differ between writers some broad trends emerge: they were professional musicians who were often harpers; they were responsible for elements of Scottish music known in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, if not the authors of known songs and ballads; Highland bards sung the praises of their chiefs; bards and/or minstrels form an important part of a narrative of the developing sophistication of Scottish music; and they experienced a golden age of minstrelsy/bardism followed by a period of decline and eventual extinction.

### 2.3.5. Written Sources

In addition to the focus on collection from oral sources discussed above, a further element in the writing of Scottish music history from the 1770s onwards was the use of written sources which provide information about song but which are not complete songs of the type published by Ramsay and subsequent publishers in themselves.

In his 1783 *Select Scottish Ballads*, the extended edition of his 1781 contribution to the history of poetry, *Scottish Tragic Ballads*, John Pinkerton refers to “a book printed at St.

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<sup>121</sup> [John Ramsay of Ochtertyre] 1784, *Influence of Poetry and Music*, 10.

<sup>122</sup> Leyden 1801, *Complaynt*, 253-254.

<sup>123</sup> Campbell 1798, *Introduction to History of Poetry*, 23-24.

Andrews in 1548, called *The Complaint of Scotland*" as the source of names of songs popular in the sixteenth century. Having listed the names of the songs drawn from the poem, Pinkerton notes that none of the popular songs of the late eighteenth century appear in the list. In consequence, he argues that "This list, which is of exceeding curiosity, may teach us that not one of our Scottish popular airs is so ancient as 1548".<sup>124</sup> Pinkerton's use of this source is an isolated example in his writings of the use of a written source in the investigation of the antiquity of song.

A much more extensive use of written sources was given by Joseph Ritson in his 1794 publication *Scotish Songs*. Ritson strenuously argued against the use of oral material, stating at one point that Scotland has many ballads "preserved by tradition among the country people; None of these bear satisfactory marks of the antiquity they pretend to". Ritson also doubted the ability, claimed by many of his contemporaries, to distinguish between ancient and modern material: "with respect to vulgar poetry, preserved by tradition, it is almost impossible to discriminate the ancient from the modern, the true from the false". He concluded that: "Tradition, in short, is a species of alchemy which converts gold to lead."<sup>125</sup>

Ritson's suspicion of the oral is reflected in the method by which he compiled his collection of songs, and in his account of the history of song which accompanies the collection. Ritson carefully details the written sources of all of the song texts and melodies in the early pages of his introductory material: the songs are drawn from manuscript collections and other published collections; the melodies largely from *Orpheus Caledonius*, Alexander Stuart's *Musick For Allan Ramsay's Collection of Scots Songs*, *The Caledonian Pocket Companion*, "Napier's collections of Scots tunes", *The Scots Musical Museum* and a few from manuscript collections such as "a MS. collection of (chiefly) Scottish tunes in the library of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, made about fifty years ago for the laird of Macfarlane" (vi). Ritson sets out this history of song as a chronological list of written sources. Ritson's chronological lists cover the gamut of

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<sup>124</sup> Pinkerton 1783, *Select Scotish Ballads*, Vol. 2, xxx-xxxii.

<sup>125</sup> Ritson 1794, *Scotish Song*, lxxx-lxxxi. Subsequent references to this publication will appear in parentheses in the main text.

written sources about the history of song used by subsequent writers. Ritson's and later uses of written sources in this way is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

### 2.3.6. The Highlands

A further theme in the writing of Scottish music history from the 1770s is the role of the Highlands. Although many collections are labelled as "Scottish" these rarely include material from throughout the geographical area of the whole nation, the Gaelic-speaking Highlands often being excluded. Ramsay of Ochtertyre, writing in 1791, for example, entitled his letter to the editor of *The Bee* 'On Scottish Songs', yet in the first paragraph he states that his interest lies in "the use and progress of the admired songs that are sung to melodies, peculiar to the Scottish Low-landers". He adds, in a footnote, "For the difference between them and the Highland vocal airs, consult Mr. McDonald's collection of the latter".<sup>126</sup> Alexander Campbell, writing in 1798, similarly defines "Scottish song" as having a Lowland focus: "When such melodies as we have already defined, are chaunted to verses in the various dialects of the Lowlands of Scotland, descriptive of the manners, sentiments, and occupations of the people, we cannot admit any other into the description of Scottish song".<sup>127</sup>

Highland material tends to be labelled as "Highland", as for example in the title of the 1784 publication *A Collection of Highland Vocal Airs*. An extreme example of the separation between "Highland" and "Scottish" material is provided by Thomson's 1822 *Select Melodies of Scotland*. Having outlined the "national scale" and how the "Scottish Melodies" conform to it using Lowland melodies, Thomson goes on to examine Highland vocal music. He writes that Highland music differs from Lowland in its "expression", but that it uses the same scale. This comment on Highland music comes at the beginning of a passage in which Thomson examines the music of a range of countries in order to account for deviations from the national scale: Ireland, Wales, Italy, France, Spain and Scandinavia are all included.<sup>128</sup> In including the Highlands in this passage, along with a string of cross-cultural comparisons, Thomson portrays the Highlands as a distinctly

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<sup>126</sup> Runcole [John Ramsay of Ochtertyre] 1791, *On Scottish Songs*, 201.

<sup>127</sup> Campbell 1798, *Introduction to History of Poetry*, 9.

<sup>128</sup> Thomson 1822, *Select Melodies of Scotland*, 7-8.

different musical culture to that of the Lowlands which form the main focus of his piece. The differentiation between "Scottish" and "Highland" continues in the indexes to the melodies, in which Highland melodies are labelled as such, like the Welsh and Irish melodies, whilst the "Scottish" melodies are not marked at all (Figure 1).

THE MELODIES,					
VOLUME FOURTH.					
INDEX TO THEIR NAMES IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER.					
<small>THE MELODIES, ACCORDING TO THE PRINCIPLES STATED IN THE DISSERTATION, MAY BE CLASSED IN THE FOLLOWING MANNER: THOSE MARKED</small>					
MARKS ABOVE REFERRED TO.					
A, as the oldest, and of remote antiquity.					
B, as the productions of more recent periods.					
C, as modern productions, not older than the 18th century.					
Names of the Melodies.	Marks above referred to.	Page.	Names of the Melodies.	Marks above referred to.	Page.
Chiling O'Guiry . . . . .	Irish	46	O'er the hills and far away . . . . .	B	6
Clerk Richard , &c. (by R. A. Smith) C	55		O might I but my Patrick love . . . . .	Irish	42
Crochallin . . . . .	Highland	58	Phely and Willy . . . . .	B	5
Fair Helen of Kirkconnel . . . . .	A	21	Planxty Kelly . . . . .	Irish	44
Glenara . . . . .	C	2	Pull away jolly boys . . . . .	B	15
Happiness lost, (by G. Thomson) . . . . .	C	50	Rothiemurchus Rant . . . . .	Highland	29
Hooly and Fairly . . . . .	B	5	Tak' your auld cloak about ye . . . . .	B	4
If a body meet a body . . . . .	A	50	Thou art gane awa frae me, Mary . . . . .	C	23
I saw thee weep, (by G. Thomson) . . . . .	C	40	The blue bell of Scotland . . . . .	B	18
Jenny's bawbee, (Dance tune) . . . . .	C	56	The Border widow's lament . . . . .	A	59
Johnnie Cope . . . . .	B	22	The Braes of Ballochmyle (By Allan Masterton) . . . . .	C	12
Johnnie Faw, or the Gipsey Laddie . . . . .	A	55	The cottage maid . . . . .	Welsh	47
John o' Badenyon, (Dance tune) . . . . .	B	28	The East nook of Fife, (Dance tune) . . . . .	B	24
Katherine Ogie . . . . .	A	8	The Flowers of the Forest . . . . .	B	11
Kellyburn braces . . . . .	A	27	The Gaberlunzie man . . . . .	B	31
Lord Balgonie's favourite . . . . .	C	10	The Hopeless lover . . . . .	B	7
Lord Ullin's daughter, (by G. Thomson) . . . . .	C	1	The Lament of Flora Macdonald . . . . .	C	13
Lough Sheeling . . . . .	Irish	41	The Lea rigg . . . . .	B	34
Maltraeth . . . . .	Welsh	49	The Maid that tends the goats . . . . .	B	16
Muirland Willie . . . . .	A	25	The Monks of Bangor's march . . . . .	Welsh	48
My love she's but a lassie yet . . . . .	B	26	The morning air plays on my face . . . . .	Irish	45
My teacher's the jewel . . . . .	A	20	The rock and a wee pickle tow . . . . .	B	38
O bonny lass will you lyce in a barrack	B	19	The Troubadour, (by G. Thomson) . . . . .	C	9
			Tibby Fowler . . . . .	A	52
			Willy was a wanton wag . . . . .	A	17

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Figure 1 – Index to the melodies in George Thomson's 1822 *Select Melodies of Scotland*, volume 4, showing the marking of Highland melodies © Edinburgh University Library, Special Collections Department.

There are, however, some occasions on which Lowland and Highland music are mixed. An example occurs in *The Tea-Table Miscellany*, in which Ramsay included the song 'Love inviting Reason: A Song to the Tune of, - Chami ma chattie, ne duce skar mi', identified by

Gelbart as a corruption of a Gaelic title which had recently appeared in a collection of Irish tunes.<sup>129</sup>

A further example is provided by Alexander Campbell's 1816 collection *Albyn's Anthology*: Campbell subtitles his collection: "The modern Scottish and English verses adapted to the Highland, Hebridean and Lowland melodies...", highlighting the exceptionally wide scope of his material. Of the thirty-six items in volume one, twenty-four are set to melodies with Gaelic names. The song 'I Still May Boast My Will is Free' to the Gaelic air 'An t-Ailleagan' is presented in a manner typical of the collection, with an English text by the editor, a Gaelic text and then a translation of the Gaelic text. The Gaelic text appears above the notated music, the English text below. In his 1798 publication, *An Introduction to the History of Poetry in Scotland*, Alexander Campbell, while he defined "Scottish song" as of Lowland origin, is notable for being one of the few to draw a connection between Lowland and Highland material. He characterises Highland song as a precursor to Lowland song:

the nearer a melody approached this scale, so in the same proportion is it to be reckoned the more genuine and ancient; and this remark applies to Highland, as well as Lowland Scottish airs; and as the Lowland melodies are evidently derived from the Highland, and if the examples which I bring to the standard of the *primary scale of music* from the former, illustrate this position; how much more ought such as might be adduced from the latter.<sup>130</sup>

Yet despite this mixing of Highland and Lowland material in one publication, or their connection in a chronological framework, Campbell continues to maintain some distinction between Highland and Lowland, indicated by his disapproval of the 1751 collection *Ais-eiridh na sean chànan Albannaich*:

Alexander Macdonald published a small volume of Gaelic songs, many of which are directed to be sung to Lowland airs, such as *Through the Wood, Laddie, Tweedside, The Lass of Patie's Mill, &c.* as if there did not exist

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<sup>129</sup> Gelbart 2012, *Allan Ramsay: the Idea of 'Scottish Music'*, 96.

<sup>130</sup> Campbell 1798, *Introduction to History of Poetry*, 7.

Highland and Hebridean melodies in abundance and better suited to Celtic vocal poetry than Low Country tunes.<sup>131</sup>

Despite these examples of the mixing of Highland and Lowland material, the Highlands tend then to occupy a separate and often marginal position in the writing of Scottish music history.

### 2.3.7. Instruments

A final theme of concern to writers on Scottish music history was the instruments of the past. For the majority of writers the instruments used for historic music were of relatively small concern. Instruments were covered where they fitted into other narratives, but generally were not considered sufficiently important to discuss as a subject in their own right. This can be seen, for example, in the coverage of James I and harp playing. That James I played the harp is mentioned by Hawkins, Tytler, Pinkerton, Ramsay of Ochtertyre and Ritson. For the majority of these writers this is simply used as proof that James I was a musician to support their discussions of the role of James as the originator of Scottish song.<sup>132</sup> Instruments such as the crwth, which did not have such connections to other narratives, were ignored by the majority of writers. The carving of an instrument identified as a crwth amongst the sculptures at Melrose abbey was covered in a paper and article by Daines Barrington in *Archaeologia*, the proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of London, in 1775.<sup>133</sup> In writing of the carving of the crwth at Melrose, Barrington not only opens up the possibility of discussing the crwth more, but also the potential for the use of other instruments depicted in sculpture at Melrose as sources for the music history of Scotland. Yet discussions of the crwth and of this source do not make their way into writings on Scottish music history.

Those writers who do discuss instruments in more detail, with the exception of McDonald, Ramsay of Ochtertyre and Leyden, use the history of instruments to help illuminate the history of song. Franklin's discussion of the role of harpers and minstrels outlined above

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<sup>131</sup> Campbell 1816, *Albyn's Anthology*, vi.

<sup>132</sup> Hawkins 1776, *General History* Vol. 4, 4 fn.; Tytler 1779, *Dissertation*, 631-632; Pinkerton 1783, *Select Scottish Ballads*, Vol. 2, 164; [John Ramsay of Ochtertyre] 1784, *Influence of Poetry and Music*, 11; Ritson 1794, *Scotish Song*, xciii.

<sup>133</sup> Barrington 1775, *Instruments used in Wales*, 30.

is one example. William Tytler provides another good example: songs of his second period differ from earlier songs in the introduction of “the semitones” and of the use of the seventh of the key, a change Tytler attributes to the increased popularity of the harp brought about by James I being a harper.<sup>134</sup> Thomson uses the history of instruments in a similar manner, although to date historic song, rather than to account for the development of song dated by other means. Thomson argues that since the bagpipe, viol and rebec make use of the diatonic scale and were used at the beginning of the fifteenth century, those songs which use the diatonic scale must be later than this date.<sup>135</sup> Ritson and Dauney also seek to illuminate the history of song. McDonald and Ramsay of Ochtertyre take a broader view of the history of instruments in the Highlands in their 1784 publication, including consideration of pipe music with no link to song. Leyden similarly has a focus outside the confines of the history of song: he seeks to illuminate the sixteenth-century text of *The Complaynt of Scotland*.

## 2.4. Conclusion

To summarise, following the publications of Allan Ramsay in the 1720s publications of Scots songs became very popular. Some of the songs were attributed by subsequent publishers to David Rizzio. The 1770s onwards saw an explosion in the volume of writing on Scottish music history which continued to be focussed almost exclusively on the history of the Scots songs that were being sung by writers’ contemporaries. A number of key themes emerged: the origins of songs with James I or shepherds; the characteristic scale types of historic song; the role of bards and minstrels; the importance of collecting otherwise lost historic songs and ballads from oral sources; the role of information gathered from written sources; Highland music history as a subject of study; and the musical instruments of the past. Not all themes were explored by all writers, but most include a variety of these elements.

In the chapters which follow, the idea that Scots songs and ballads were ancient, and as such could be used as a source of information about the music of the past, and the

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<sup>134</sup> Tytler 1779, *Dissertation*, 631-632.

<sup>135</sup> Thomson 1822, *Select Melodies of Scotland*, 12.

historic narratives constructed around them will be examined thematically. It will be argued that the creation of Scottish music history from these materials was a product of more widely held ideas about both the universal nature of the past and specifically Scottish historical events.

### **3. “The earliest testimony hitherto met with of the excellence and antiquity of Scotish music”: More on Allan Ramsay and the Beginning of the Writing of Scottish Music History**

Ramsay, in his Tea-table miscellany, published, as before observed, in 1724, remarks of the Scotish tunes, that though they “have not lengthened variety of music, yet they have an agreeable gaiety and natural sweetness, that make them acceptable wherever they are known, not only among ourselves, but in other countries. They are, for the most part,” he says, “so cheerful, that on hearing them well play’d or sung, we find a difficulty to keep ourselves from dancing,” and, “what further adds to the esteem we have for them, is their antiquity, and their being universally known.” This passage is the rather noticed, as being the earliest testimony hitherto met with of the excellence and antiquity of Scotish music.<sup>1</sup>

So wrote Joseph Ritson in his 1794 *Scotish Songs*, characterising Allan Ramsay’s almost incidental comments in a book of songs for popular enjoyment as the beginning of the writing of Scottish music history.<sup>2</sup> Ritson was not alone in placing Ramsay at the beginning of the writing of Scottish music history; very little was known about the songs published in the *Miscellany* prior to Ramsay, a situation that largely continues to this day. Since so little is known about songs prior to Ramsay, and since Ramsay is the first to state in print that songs were ancient, his perceptions of the antiquity of the songs are worth examining in more detail.

In this chapter it will be argued that the features that Ramsay drew out as characteristic of ancient song were those that were already seen as characteristic of Scots songs: simplicity, pastorality and naturalness. The parallels between his characterisation of ancient song in the *Miscellany* and ancient poetry in *The Ever Green*, however, show that, for Ramsay, these features were characteristic of ancient material in general. This is perhaps unsurprising, given the appearance of the same features in contemporary characterisations of pastoral poetry, a genre perceived to have ancient roots. Ramsay’s argument for the antiquity of the ancient material in the *Miscellany* was reinforced by

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<sup>1</sup> Ritson 1794, *Scotish Song*, cv.

<sup>2</sup> As I have also noted – see chapter 2.

Ramsay's use of Italian music and culture as a point of contrast, since Italian culture represented the most modern and refined culture in contemporary thought. In addition, the differences between the language of the "old", or partially old texts, and the newly composed texts reinforces Ramsay's statement of their antiquity. Ramsay's presentation and characterisation of purportedly ancient songs in the *Miscellany* twins, then, more widely held ideas about the past in general with ideas about the language of the past specific to the Scottish context to fundamentally underpin the idea that some songs were ancient.

### **3.1.Songs from *The Tea-Table Miscellany* After Ramsay**

The focus of music historians on the body of Scots song published by Ramsay and canonised by later writers has been shown in chapter 22. It was not simply in this focus on the same type of material that Ramsay continued to exercise an influence over the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Like Ritson, many other writers on Scottish music history show their debt to Ramsay by placing their collections and writings on music history in a tradition which they characterise as having begun with Ramsay. David Herd is the earliest example, placing his collection as the latest in a field of publishing that began with the *Miscellany, Orpheus Caledonius* and Thomas Percy's 1765 *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*.<sup>3</sup> Writing some fifty years later, George Thomson similarly places his 1822 publication with regard to the *Miscellany*:

The *Tea-table Miscellany*, published by the celebrated Allan Ramsay, in 1724, was the first general Collection in which the admired Scottish Songs appeared without the Airs, though the poet had brought forward a *smaller* publication of the Songs some years before. In a separate Work, consisting of six very small books, he also published about 70 of the Airs, with a bass to each. To Ramsay's book, the publisher of the *Orpheus Caledonius*, as well as every succeeding publisher, has been particularly obliged,-most of the Songs which have so long been favourites, being found in the *Miscellany*. These were chiefly written by Ramsay and his friends for such Scottish Airs as they thought ill-suited with words, - Airs of which he says in his preface, - "What

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<sup>3</sup> Herd 1769, *Ancient and Modern Scots Songs*, v.

further adds to the esteem we have for them, is, their *antiquity*, and their being universally known.”<sup>4</sup>

William Motherwell concludes the introductory material to *Minstrelsy: Ancient and Modern* of 1827 with a list of publications which he describes as those in which the traditional songs and ballads of Scotland prior to his publication have been published. Amongst these he lists *The Tea-Table Miscellany*.<sup>5</sup>

Even seventy years after the first publication of the *Miscellany* William Dauney continued to recognise its pivotal role in the writing of Scottish music history:

The next point to which the Editor would solicit the attention of the public is, how far this collection of Scottish airs precedes in date those that have hitherto appeared. And here it may occasion some surprise when it is asserted, *that it is at least one hundred years older than the earliest compilation of the kind which has ever issued from the press*. This was Thomson’s *Orpheus Caledonius*, the first volume of which appeared in 1725, and the second in 1733. In the former of these years, Allan Ramsay had published about seventy Scottish melodies with basses, as a sort of musical appendix to his “Tea Table Miscellany,” which, in like manner, with respect to the poetry, formed the first complete collection of Scottish songs.<sup>6</sup>

The importance of the *Miscellany* to later writings on Scottish music history is also shown by the use of songs first published by Ramsay, and their accompanying melodies, as examples of historic Scottish music. Both Ritson and Campbell, in addition to the comments regarding Ramsay outlined above, publish songs first published by Ramsay in their collections.<sup>7</sup> Tytler differs from Ritson and Campbell in that he does not publish a collection of songs, yet many of the examples of the music of different historic periods in his ‘Dissertation on the Scottish Music’ are drawn from the *Miscellany*: ‘Hap me wi’ thy

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<sup>4</sup> Thomson 1822, *Select Melodies of Scotland*, 19.

<sup>5</sup> Motherwell 1827, *Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern*, lxiii.

<sup>6</sup> Dauney 1838, *Ancient Scotch Melodies*, 15-17.

<sup>7</sup> Ritson specifies the *Miscellany* as a source of songs in his preface. ‘The Blythsome Bridal’ in the *Miscellany* is entitled ‘The Blythsome Wedding’ in Campbell’s publication. Other songs which appear in both Campbell’s publication and the *Miscellany* are ‘Maggie’s Tocher’, ‘My Jo Janet’, ‘Scornfu Nansy’, ‘Fy gar rub her o’er wi strae’, ‘Auld lang syne’, ‘The collier’s bonny lassie’, ‘Tweedside’, ‘Ew-Burghts Marion’, ‘Saw ye nae my peggy’, ‘An thou were my ain thing’, ‘My dearie if you die’, and ‘Gilderoy’.

'pettycoat', 'Will ye go to the ewe-bughts, Marion' and 'The Gaberlunye Man' amongst them.<sup>8</sup>

These references to the *Miscellany*, and later uses of material from it, show that Ramsay was seen as a pivotal figure in the writing of Scottish music history throughout the eighteenth and into the early nineteenth century. In the next section we will see that the positioning of the *Miscellany* as the beginning of the writing of Scottish music history by later writers also reflects a dearth of evidence about Scots songs prior to Ramsay's publication. This lack of evidence, as we shall see, further highlights the importance of considering Ramsay's role in the creation of ancient Scottish music history in detail.

### **3.2.Scots Songs and Tunes Prior to Ramsay**

Ramsay himself does not specify where the melodies and texts he adapted came from. This was seen as a problem by later eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century writers such as John Ramsay of Ochtertyre and John Leyden, as we will see in chapter 4. In terms of the texts, tracing the earlier manifestations of those that Ramsay and his collaborators adapted has not yet been satisfactorily achieved. David Johnson identifies four main types of material in the *Miscellany*: new lyrics to "traditional" Scots tunes written by Ramsay and others; "Scotch songs" by the London-based writer Thomas D'Urfey with inaccuracies in the use of Scots corrected; "genuine folk songs" "touched up"; and poems from the old Scottish court and seventeenth-century vernacular pieces from the Bannatyne Manuscript. Johnson's confidence in his classification is perhaps undermined by his comment, on the same page, that Ramsay had "obliterated" traces of song prior to 1723.<sup>9</sup> As Margaret Smith notes, "...almost no MS material has been traced for those texts in *The Tea-Table Miscellany*, the majority, which are not by Ramsay". The problem is compounded by the difficulties of attributing material which had been partially re-written; Alexander Kinghorn and Alexander Law argue that Ramsay partially re-wrote even some texts which he labelled as "old".<sup>10</sup> Kinghorn and Law do not support their argument with

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<sup>8</sup> Tytler 1783, *Poetical Remains*, 198, 224 and 225 respectively.

<sup>9</sup> Johnson 2003, *Music and Society*, 134.

<sup>10</sup> Smith, Lindsay, Goodridge, and Alexander 1992, *Index of English Literary Manuscripts*, 185; Kinghorn and Law 1970, *Works of Allan Ramsay*, 143.

evidence of the older texts of the “old” songs; it seems likely that their argument is based on some of the abrupt changes of register which occur within the texts as they appear in the *Miscellany*. In consequence, we have little means of judging the extent to which the songs that Ramsay had labelled as “old” or “old with additions” were Ramsay’s own work.

In terms of the melodies, however, information can be gleaned from seventeenth-century manuscripts. Of the eighty-five song titles in the first volume of the *Miscellany*, fifty-two can be found in the seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century manuscripts examined by Evelyn Stell in her unpublished doctoral thesis *Sources of Scottish Instrumental Music, 1603-1707*. The earliest manuscript described by Stell in which the titles appear may be the Skene Manuscript.<sup>11</sup> The dating of the manuscript is, however, uncertain. Donald Gill, in his 1988 article on the manuscript, suggested a date range of 1625-35. Stell follows Kenneth Elliott in considering the repertoire to be somewhat earlier and consequently suggests a short copying period c.1620. This use of repertory to date the manuscript is, however, challenged by Warwick Edwards who argues that, with respect to such manuscripts, repertory provides an uncertain guide to dating. Consequently, it is not clear whether the manuscript was compiled for the first John Skene or his son: if it were for the son, who died sometime before 1669, the manuscript could have been compiled much later than suggested by Gill or Stell.<sup>12</sup> Suffice it to say that the manuscript was compiled some time prior to the 1670s, at least, therefore, fifty years prior to the publication of *The Tea-Table Miscellany*. ‘John Andersonne my Jo’ is one title that appears in the manuscript. So a title which appears in the *Miscellany* appears in a manuscript which may have been copied as much as a century before Ramsay’s publication. Titles found in the *Miscellany* appear in manuscripts described by Stell copied throughout the seventeenth century and into the early eighteenth, for example: ‘Through the wood Laudie’ and ‘Broom of coude knous’ appear in Lady Margaret Wemyss’

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<sup>11</sup> The manuscript is housed at the National Library of Scotland , Adv.5.2.15. Although Stell entitles the manuscript “lute book” the tablature is for five-string mandora.

<sup>12</sup> Gill 1988, *Skene Manuscript*, 25; Stell 1999, *Sources of Scottish Instrumental Music*, 178; Edwards 2008, *Musical sources*, 59.

Music-book begun in 1643;<sup>13</sup> ‘Wher Helen lyes’ and ‘An the kirk would let me bee’ appear in Magdalen Cockburn’s Music-book compiled between the 1660s and the 1680s;<sup>14</sup> the Bowie manuscript, probably compiled sometime between 1685 and 1700 (50), includes fourteen titles also found in the *Miscellany*.

A large proportion of the titles appear in more than one manuscript. ‘Where Helen Lies’ and its variant titles, for example, is found in the Blaikie, Cockburn, Gairdyn, Leyden and Sutherland manuscripts. Tunes with the same titles used by Ramsay were in circulation in manuscript in Scotland throughout the eighteenth century.

The majority of the manuscripts in which these titles appear seem to have been for domestic use. The exceptions are the Thomson manuscript, which contains five titles also found in the *Miscellany*, that Stell suggests may have had a professional military origin, and the James Guthrie manuscript, which contains six titles found in the *Miscellany*. Stell suggests that the well-worn condition of the Guthrie manuscript, and the sketchy nature of some of the notation indicates its use by a professional fiddler of middle rank (96-97).

Many of the other manuscripts appear to have had a pedagogical use. Stell suggests use by young ladies learning the level of music required by the marriage market in the case of Magdalen Cockburn’s Music-book (75), the Sutherland manuscript (197), the Blaikie Manuscript (40-41), and Agnes Hume’s Music-book (100). Matthew Spring suggests similar use of the Balcarres lute book in his edition of the manuscript.<sup>15</sup> Rosalind Marshall notes that by the end of the seventeenth century ladies of the peerage expected their daughters to be educated in a range of subjects, including music, and that middle class mothers were beginning to follow suit.<sup>16</sup> Other manuscripts appear to have been used by aristocratic men for recreational purposes: the Newbattle violin manuscript 1, and the Panmure violin manuscript among them (134, 156, 295-296).

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<sup>13</sup> Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Dep.314 (23), detailed in Stell 1999, *Sources of Scottish Instrumental Music*, 215.

<sup>14</sup> Stell 1999, *Sources of Scottish Instrumental Music*, 74. Subsequent references to this study will appear in parentheses in the main text.

<sup>15</sup> Spring 2010, *Balcarres Lute Book*, vol. 1, xxiii.

<sup>16</sup> Marshall 1983, *Virgins and Viragos*, 132-133.

The manuscripts which include song titles that also appear in the *Miscellany* indicate a number of different instruments. In addition to the violin, the lute, lyra-viol, viol, cittern, keyboard, mandora, recorder and cello are all indicated (15). The recorder and cello appear to be indicated by the Thomson manuscript, and are used by Stell to support her suggestion of a military origin for this compilation (208). Considering the other manuscripts, we are left with a picture of primarily domestic music-making by aristocratic young ladies on the popular stringed and keyboard instruments of the day.

Titles found in the *Miscellany* appear amongst other types of material: the Skene manuscript for example includes English popular tunes (258); Margaret Wemyss' Music-book includes English masque songs and dances (258-259) and French melodies (260-261); and the Cockburn manuscript includes dance suites by composers such as Banister, Gregory and Ives (263). Edwards notes that it is only towards the end of the seventeenth century that "systematic collections of native airs" begin to appear.<sup>17</sup> The earlier manuscripts in which titles indicated in the *Miscellany* appear cannot be considered as collections of "our Scots tunes" in the same way that Ramsay styles the *Miscellany*.

The predominance of domestic music-making suggested by the manuscripts may be to a great extent a factor of the increased chance of survival of manuscripts in the libraries of aristocratic families. Performance in other contexts is hinted at by the Thomson and Guthrie manuscripts. The appearance of titles from the *Miscellany* in the manuscripts examined by Stell, however, challenges its description as "folk" or "traditional" music as we currently understand the terms, suggesting use across social classes, and an element of written transmission.

The most important facet of the appearance of these titles in these seventeenth-century manuscripts to the current enquiry, however, is that there is no indication of a perception that the material was ancient, or, if such a perception was held, that it was important enough to write down. Allan Ramsay's declaration of the historic nature of such songs in print therefore marks a key moment of change in the writing of Scottish music history.

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<sup>17</sup> Edwards 2008, *Musical sources*, 62.

Ramsay's innovative position also means that his characterisation of historic song warrants further examination.

### **3.3.Pastoral Poetry, Italian Music and English Verse: the Cultural Context of Ramsay's Characterisation of Ancient Music and Song**

Although later writers continue to place Ramsay in an important position at the head of the writing of Scottish music history, Ramsay's comments on the antiquity of the songs he published were slight indeed. He did, however, highlight some features which he saw as characteristic of ancient songs and tunes. Despite the marginal nature of Ramsay's comments, the features of songs that he draws out as characteristic underpinned the continued consideration of those songs as ancient in the later eighteenth century (see chapter 4). Despite the difficulty in knowing the extent to which the song texts in particular really were "old", noted above, the impact of Ramsay's work on later writers makes his comments on the defining characteristics of ancient song and the context in which they and the old songs appear in the *Miscellany* worth examining in more detail. Ramsay was not the first to characterise Scots songs as he did, and neither was he alone in perceiving these features as characteristic of ancient material in general; in the next sections the appearance of the same features in contemporary discussions of "Scotch songs" and ancient pastoral poetry will be outlined in order to show how Ramsay drew on ideas which were current outwith Scotland, and concerned the international genre of pastoral poetry. In the subsequent sections it will be argued that the way that Ramsay wrote about ancient songs, and the way he presented them alongside contemporary English neo-classical verse in the *Miscellany* reinforced his characterisation of ancient songs, and his assertion that they were ancient, by drawing on contemporary understanding of Italian music and English verse specific to the Scottish context.

The marginal nature of Ramsay's comments in the *Miscellany* is highlighted by comparison with his 'Preface' to *The Ever Green, Being a Collection of Scots Poems, Wrote by the Ingenious Before 1600*, published in 1724. *The Ever Green* is a publication with a much more obviously antiquarian bent: it trumpets the historic nature of its contents in its title; the dedicatory poem refers to the "valuable remains" included in the book; the

‘Preface’ begins with a lengthy discussion of the differences between the poems in the book and “modern Writings”; and, most tellingly, Ramsay apologises for occasionally erring on the wrong side of good taste, writing that “I do not expect that these *Poems* should please every Body, nay the critical *Reader* must needs find several Faults; for I own that there will be found in these *Volumes* two or three Pieces, whose *Antiquity* is their greatest Value”.<sup>18</sup> In contrast, the comments on the antiquity of some of the songs included in the 1724 edition of the *Miscellany* are hidden away in the contents page at the back of the book, and the comment on the antiquity of tunes in the ‘Preface’ to the 1729 edition is not even sufficiently important to warrant a whole sentence of its own, being combined with the virtue of tunes being universally known.<sup>19</sup>

Ramsay was not the first to publish purportedly Scottish songs: from the second half of the seventeenth century English collections such as Playford’s *The English Dancing Master* had included “Scotch” tunes.<sup>20</sup> Scots songs were churned out in great numbers by Thomas D’Urfey whose songs have been characterised by David Johnson as having the subject matter of either sex in high society or the England-Scotland political situation, as centring around characters called Sawney, Jockey, Jenny or Moggy, and as being written in a “synthetic” Scots dialect including Scottish place names and adjectives with provincial or obsolescent overtones such as “blithe” and “bonny”.<sup>21</sup> Matthew Gelbart argues that such songs lacked musical consistency, but were perceived to share certain traits:

Rather than having a strong *stylistic* hallmark, it seems that Scotland for the English still represented a more abstract idea of cultural-national essence; and in Scotland’s case that essence was “nature.” Despite the many inconsistencies, by 1700, when John Dryden compared Chaucer’s work to “Scotch songs,” with their character of “rude sweetness...natural...though not perfect,” there was obviously a shared character recognized for these songs.<sup>22</sup>

Gelbart describes a trend from the 1720s in London to hold up “simplicity” and “straightforwardness” from “natural” Scottish music as positive characteristics, and to

<sup>18</sup> Ramsay 1724, *Ever Green*, v; vii-viii; x (italics reversed).

<sup>19</sup> Ramsay 1724, *Tea-Table Miscellany*, v.

<sup>20</sup> Fiske 1983, *Scotland in Music*, 3.

<sup>21</sup> Johnson 2003, *Music and Society*, 132.

<sup>22</sup> Gelbart 2007, *The Invention of “Folk” and “Art” Music*, 28.

fuse them into a new British national character in opposition to ornaments and artifice of Italian music.<sup>23</sup>

When, in the 1729 edition of *The Tea-table Miscellany*, Ramsay wrote more extensively about the songs and tunes that he perceived to be ancient, the features that he highlighted mirror these earlier English characterisations of Scots songs. Following on from the passage quoted at the top of this chapter, in which Ramsay notes the lack of “lengthened variety”, gaiety and natural sweetness of ancient tunes, Ramsay writes that such songs can be enjoyed “without the Trouble of being taught”. Those who were untaught “...are not judges of the fine Flourishes of new Musick imported from *Italy* and elsewhere, yet will listen with pleasure to Tunes that they know, and can join with in the Chorus”. The words are “an harmonious speaking of merry, witty or soft Thoughts”, most enjoyed by “People, who have not bestowed much of their Time in acquiring a Taste for that downright perfect Musick”. He describes those texts that he and his collaborators had not written as “old Verses as have been done Time out of Mind” and emphasises their “merry Images of the low Character”.<sup>24</sup>

Yet it was not only in the *Miscellany* that Ramsay drew out such features as characteristic of ancient material, comparing the *Miscellany* with *The Ever Green* is, again, revealing. In the preface to *The Ever Green* Ramsay describes the poems as ancient, and notes some of their characteristics. These characteristics show parallels with some of the features that Ramsay describes as characteristic of ancient songs in *The Tea-Table Miscellany*. In the preface to *The Ever Green* he writes of the poems’ “natural Strength of Thought and Simplicity of Stile”, contrasting this with the “affected Delicacies and studied Refinements,” of “modern Writings”. He goes on to write that “Their *Images* are native, and their *Landskips* domestick, copied from those Fields and Meadows we every Day behold”. He draws a contrast between the modern and imported, writing that “When these good old *Bards* wrote, we had not yet made Use of imported Trimmings upon our

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<sup>23</sup> Gelbart 2007, *The Invention of "Folk" and "Art" Music*, 32.

<sup>24</sup> Ramsay 1729, *Tea-Table Miscellany*, Dublin 1729, v-vi, italics reversed.

Cloaths, nor of foreign Embroidery in our Writings. Their *Poetry* is the Product of their own Country, not pilfered and spoiled in the Transportation from abroad".<sup>25</sup>

Ramsay's characterisation of ancient poetry in *The Ever Green* has many parallels with his characterisation of the melodies he describes as "ancient" in the *Miscellany*: the sense of the natural appears in both; the lack of "lengthened variety" noted in the *Miscellany* parallels the "Simplicity of Stile" in *The Ever Green*; "fine flourishes" in one parallel "studied Refinements" in the other; the subjects of ancient song and ancient poetry are local and rustic. The contrast he draws between ancient native composition and imported foreign elements stands out in his discussion of both poetry and of song.

The simplicity, natural sweetness and contrast to "downright perfect Musick" of the material published in the *Miscellany* noted by Ramsay mirror characteristics which were already present in English creations of "Scotch" songs and music. Yet Ramsay's attention to similar characteristics of the sixteenth-century poetry in *The Ever Green* suggests that in the *Miscellany* he was not simply parroting an established view of Scottish song. Ramsay's perception of Scots songs differs because the characteristics that he notes are not only the characteristics of song, he perceived them as the characteristics of historic material more generally. This allows us to look at the context of Ramsay's work beyond existing characterisations of Scots songs. In the sections which follow, it will be argued that Ramsay's otherwise unsupported comments with regard to the antiquity of Scots songs were so convincing because his characterisation of the distinctive features of ancient song and the contrast between the old and new songs in the *Miscellany* played into a range of contemporary perceptions: perceptions of the nature of the past evident in contemporary discussions about pastoral poetry; perceptions of modern Italian music; and perceptions of the antiquity of Scots.

### **3.3.1. Parallels with Perceptions of Pastoral Poetry**

Ramsay was not alone in seeing features as simplicity, pastorality and naturalness as characteristic of the past: the same features are highlighted in contemporary discussions

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<sup>25</sup> Ramsay 1724, *Ever Green*, vii-x.

of pastoral poetry, an international genre believed to have ancient roots. The defining features of pastoral poetry are a matter of much debate in literary criticism.<sup>26</sup> A broad-brush definition has been attempted by Terry Gifford in his 1999 book, *Pastoral*. Gifford defines a pastoral as “A literary form... and motif which we can recognise as deriving from certain early Greek and Roman poems about life in the country, and about the life of the shepherd in particular”.<sup>27</sup> Gifford uses the phrase “about life in the country” with care, since he goes on to argue that the pastoral has always been understood as a literary discourse that meets somewhere between the “sophisticated discourse of the court and the illiterate discourse of the real shepherd”.<sup>28</sup> Paul Alpers, in his roughly contemporary 1997 book *What is Pastoral?* argues that pastoral is not simply a picture of life in the country, but that pastoral works are defined by being “representations of shepherds....who are felt to be representative of some other or of all other men and/or women”.<sup>29</sup>

Taken alone, there is case to be made for considering the songs in the *Miscellany* as pastorals: the texts are populated by shepherds and swains, and by characters such as Chloe from classical pastoral.<sup>30</sup> Many of the songs take place in a rural landscape of verdant fields and broomy hillsides. The inclusion of songs from the *Miscellany* in Ramsay’s 1725 pastoral play *The Gentle Shepherd*, followed by the inclusion of the further songs added to the play in 1729 in later editions of the *Miscellany*, shows that Ramsay himself saw such songs as pastoral. Contemporary perceptions of the nature of pastoral poetry show many parallels with Ramsay’s characterisation of Scottish songs.

What pastoral poetry was and what it should do were, as at present, topics of debate in the early eighteenth centuries. Congleton, in his 1968 study *Theories of Pastoral Poetry in England 1684-1798* identifies two distinct schools of thought: the neo-classicists and the rationalists.<sup>31</sup> The difference between the groups stemmed from the differing ideas of

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<sup>26</sup> For a historical overview of ideas about what the pastoral is see Alpers 1997, *What is Pastoral?* Chapter 1.

<sup>27</sup> Gifford 1999, *Pastoral*, 1.

<sup>28</sup> Gifford 1999, *Pastoral*, 46.

<sup>29</sup> Alpers 1997, *What is Pastoral?* 26.

<sup>30</sup> See for example, Ramsay 1724, *Tea-Table Miscellany*, 21.

<sup>31</sup> Congleton 1968, *Theories of Pastoral Poetry*, 75.

the seventeenth-century French writers Rapin and Fontenelle and turned on the two questions of the proper subjects for pastoral and the level of importance of rules of pastoral poetry derived from ancient authors such as Theocritus and Virgil. Neo-classicists saw the depiction of a past rural golden age as the proper subject for pastoral, and believed that such depictions could be successfully achieved by following rules of composition derived from ancient authors. Conversely, rationalists sought to replace the nymphs and satyrs of classical pastoral with the “superstitious mythology which prevails among the shepherds of our own country”, as Thomas Addison wrote in *The Spectator* in 1712, to create a more modern, Anglicised pastoral which was less reliant on rules derived from the ancient authors.<sup>32</sup>

Congleton sees the two schools of thought as represented best by the work of Alexander Pope (1688-1744) and Thomas Ticknell (1685-1740).<sup>33</sup> Despite their differences, an examination of their characterisations of pastoral in Pope’s 1717 *Discourse on Pastoral Poetry* and Ticknell’s anonymously published 1713 articles in *The Guardian* reveal not only similarities between them, but also similarities with Ramsay’s characterisation of historic Scottish song.

Ramsay’s characterisation of historic song as lacking “lengthened variety” is paralleled in both Pope and Ticknell’s characterisations of pastoral poetry. Pope presents a poem of Theocritus as a particularly good example of a pastoral poem: “The complete character of this poem consists in simplicity, brevity, and delicacy; the two first of which render an eclogue natural, and the last delightful...The expression [is] humble, yet as pure as the language will afford; neat, but not florid; easy, and yet lively”. The idea of brevity is expressed in more detail further on and specifically linked to ideas about the past: pastoral poetry “...ought to preserve some relish of the old way of writing; the connections should be loose, the narrations and descriptions short, and the periods concise. Yet it is not sufficient that the sentences only be brief, the whole Eclogue should

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<sup>32</sup> Congleton 1968, *Theories of Pastoral Poetry*, 75-91. Addison’s article appears in *The Spectator* No. 523, 30<sup>th</sup> October 1712.

<sup>33</sup> Congleton 1968, *Theories of Pastoral Poetry*, 84, 87.

be so too".<sup>34</sup> Ticknell presents the same sorts of ideas through an allegorical story: a shepherd who lives the ideal pastoral life offers his daughter's hand in marriage to the suitor who can play the ideal pastoral tune. A number of suitors take up the challenge and play tunes which do not fulfil the criteria in various ways and are punished accordingly. One of the unsuccessful suitors plays a particularly complicated tune; "The Tune he played was so intricate and perplexing, that the Shepherds stood stock still, like People astonished and confounded". Another of the suitors "began a Tune, which he set off with so many Graces and Quavers, that the Shepherds and Shepherdesses....could not follow it". Conversely, the suitor who eventually wins the competition "...poured forth such melodious Notes, that though they were a little wild and irregular, they filled every Heart with Delight. The Swains immediately mingled in the Dance".<sup>35</sup> In this story those suitors who presented what might be considered "lengthened variety" of music did not win the competition, since they did not present the ideal pastoral tune. Both Pope and Ticknell present ideas about the pastoral which mirror Ramsay's characterisation of Scottish songs.

Ticknell's winning shepherd "filled every Heart with Delight" and led to dancing. This is not the only place in Ticknell's writings on the pastoral where he discusses ideas analogous to Ramsay's characterisation of Scottish songs as "gay and cheerful". In an earlier article in *The Guardian* Ticknell describes the process of composing pastoral poetry: "An Author...should form in his Fancy a Rural Scene...where...Simplicity and Joy abound".<sup>36</sup> Pope sees gaiety as at the very root of pastoral poetry, he writes of ancient shepherds that "...in their songs they took occasion to celebrate their own felicity. From hence a Poem was invented....[which] receiv'd the name of Pastoral".<sup>37</sup>

Ticknell and Pope similarly focus on the natural elements of pastoral and on the sweetness. Ticknell argued that pastoral should focus on "...the sweet Manners and

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<sup>34</sup> Pope 1717, *Discourse on Pastoral Poetry*, 4-5.

<sup>35</sup> [Thomas Ticknell] 1713, *Guardian XXXII*, 2.

<sup>36</sup> No author [Thomas Ticknell] 1713, *Guardian XXII*, 2.

<sup>37</sup> Pope 1717, *Discourse on Pastoral Poetry*, 4.

pleasing Objects of the Country".<sup>38</sup> He described an allegorical shepherdess who lived entirely according to the principles of the pastoral as having, "a Voice that was exceedingly sweet, yet had a Rusticity in its Tone".<sup>39</sup> Pope describes pastoral as: "...a design'd scene or prospect is to be presented to our view....drawn from the most agreeable objects of the country... *Theocritus* excels all others in nature...".<sup>40</sup> The brevity, simplicity, gaiety, sweetness and naturalness that Ramsay chose to draw out as features of historic song, then, and which appeared in London-based perceptions of "Scotch song", also appeared in contemporary characterisations of the pastoral.

Ramsay was not the first or only writer of the early eighteenth century to twin such characteristics with a sense of the historic: neoclassical pastoralists believed that a past golden age could and should be evoked by pastoral composition. Pope wrote that "pastoral is an image of what they call the Golden age. So that we are not to describe our shepherds as shepherds at this day really are, but as they may be conceiv'd then to have been; when a notion of quality was annex'd to that name, and the best men follow'd the employment...".<sup>41</sup> It seems likely, then, that Ramsay's selection of simplicity, pastorality and naturalness as the defining characteristics of historic song was conditioned by such perceptions of the past held more widely.

### **3.3.2. Contrast with the Italian**

In his characterisation of the material in the *Miscellany* Ramsay not only draws out the characteristics discussed above, he presents the material as a contrast to the "fine Flourishes of new Musick imported from *Italy* and elsewhere".<sup>42</sup> Ramsay's use of Italian music and culture as a contrast in other works, and the wider context of contemporary perceptions of Italian culture in general in Scotland, suggest that Ramsay's invocation of the Italian in his discussion of the songs in the *Miscellany* would have reinforced the perception that their key characteristics were simplicity, pastorality and naturalness and that these features were characteristic as a consequence of their antiquity.

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<sup>38</sup> [Thomas Ticknell] 1713, *Guardian* XXVIII, 2.

<sup>39</sup> [Thomas Ticknell] 1713, *Guardian* XXXII, 1.

<sup>40</sup> Pope 1717, *Discourse on Pastoral Poetry*, 6.

<sup>41</sup> Cited in Gifford 1999, *Pastoral*, 32.

<sup>42</sup> Ramsay 1729, *Tea-Table Miscellany*, Dublin 1729, v-vi, Italics reversed.

It is not only in the *Miscellany* that Ramsay presented the Italian as a point of contrast to Scottish material: the contrast also appears in his 1721 poem ‘To the Musick Club’:

And with Corelli’s soft *Italian* song  
Mix Cowdon Knows, and *Winter nights are long*;<sup>43</sup>

and three years later, in *The Ever Green*, Ramsay contrasts the “affected Delicacies and studied Refinements,” of “modern Writings,” with the “natural Strength of Thought and Simplicity of Stile” used by the “good old *Bards*” of the past, before the use of “imported Trimming” from Greece or Italy.<sup>44</sup> Although Ramsay is critical of those “silly” people who,

can vaunt of acquiring a tolerable Perfection in the *French* or *Italian* Tongues, if they have been a Forthnight [sic] in *Paris* or a Month in *Rome*: but shew then the most elegant Thoughts in a *Scots* Dress, they as disdainfully as stupidly condemn it as barbarous,

in *The Ever Green* (xi), his censure is reserved for his fellow Scots, not the Italian material, and no similarly strong language appears in the *Miscellany*. Instead, in the *Miscellany*, Ramsay’s use of the Italian as a contrast serves to underline the characteristics of ancient Scots tunes as simple, brief and naturally sweet.

Italian and Italianate culture were an important part of cultural life in Ramsay’s Scotland. R.D.S. Jack in *The Italian Influence on Scottish Literature* argues that in the seventeenth century Scottish writers “had been almost obsessed by foreign literature and especially by Italian.”<sup>45</sup> This interest in Italian literature and culture continued into the eighteenth century with the popularity of the Grand Tour. Jack describes the Italian author Ariosto as the “most favoured” in eighteenth-century Scotland (147).

Italian music was the modern fashion: manuscripts from the seventeenth century show that Italian songs and dances were popular amongst “members of a cultured home” in seventeenth-century Scotland. The records of the first public concert held in Edinburgh

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<sup>43</sup> Ramsay 1761, *Poems*, 188.

<sup>44</sup> Ramsay 1724, *Ever Green*, vii.

<sup>45</sup> Jack 1972, *Italian Influence*, 145. Subsequent references to this publication will appear in parentheses in the main text.

show that mainly Italian music was played and the subsequent Gentleman's concerts often featured Italian leaders and Italian singers (150-152).

Ramsay, like many, admired the artifice of Italian music, describing it as "downright perfect" in the *Miscellany*.<sup>46</sup> He was not the only eighteenth-century thinker to see the delicacy and refinement of Italian music as a contrast to Scottish songs. As in Scotland, Italian music was very popular in eighteenth-century London. From the 1720s however, there was something of a backlash against Italian music in London. As part of this Scots songs came to be seen as a "sensible" alternative to the artifice of Italian music.<sup>47</sup>

Ramsay's use of the comparison between the Scots tunes that he sees as ancient and popular fashionable Italian music that was perceived as artificial, delicate and refined serves, then, to underline the characteristics such as simplicity and naturalness that he draws out in his text. The use of the most modern music as a point of contrast underlines the historic nature of the material in the *Miscellany*. The parallels between Ramsay's characterisation of ancient songs as simple, pastoral and natural, and contemporary perceptions that pastoral song of the past was simple, pastoral and natural, further highlighted by the use of modern, refined Italian music as a point of contrast suggest the impact of ideas about the nature of the past in general on Ramsay's perception of ancient Scottish music.

### **3.3.3. Contrast with English Verse**

In addition to the impact of ideas about the nature of the past in general on Ramsay's identification and characterisation of ancient song, it seems likely that users of the *Miscellany* viewed the songs labelled as "old" or "old songs with additions" through the lens of contemporary understanding of the language of the texts, specific to the Scottish context.

Consideration of the first volume of the *Miscellany* as a whole reveals a contrast between the language of the "old" and new texts. As Derrick McClure has observed in his

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<sup>46</sup> Ramsay 1729, *Tea-Table Miscellany, Dublin 1729*, vi.

<sup>47</sup> Gelbart 2007, *The Invention of "Folk" and "Art" Music*, 32.

discussion of Ramsay's 1721 *Poems*, "a simple binary opposition between Scots and English is inadequate for discussion of Ramsay's linguistic patterns". He prefers instead a division based on the "density" of Scots elements such as pronunciation, spelling and grammar.<sup>48</sup> Variation in the density of Scots elements can be seen in the song texts included in the *Miscellany*.

Many of the new texts, such as 'The last Time I came o'er the Moor' written by Ramsay read very much like contemporary English neo-classical poetry:<sup>49</sup>

The last Time I came o'er the Moor,  
 I left my Love behind me;  
 Ye Pow'rs! What Pain do I endure  
 When soft Ideas mind me?  
 Soon as the ruddy Morn display'd  
 The beaming Day ensuing,  
 I met betimes my lovely Maid,  
 In fit Retreats for Wooing.<sup>50</sup>

Other new texts, such as 'Bessy Bell and Mary Gray' include Scots elements combined with neo-classical traits:

O *Bessy Bell* and *Mary Gray*,  
 They are twa bonny Lasses,  
 They bigg'd a Bower on yon Burn-braes  
 And theek'd it o'er wi' Rashes.  
 Fair *Bessy Bell* I loo'd Yestreen,  
 And thought I ne'er cou'd alter;  
 But *Mary Gray*'s twa pawky Een,  
 They gar my Fancy falter.

Now *Bessy*'s Hair's like a Lint Tap,  
 She smiles like a *May Morning*,  
 When *Phœbus* starts frae *Thetis'* Lap,  
 The Hills with Rays adorning...<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> McClure 1995, *Scots and its Literature*, 161. The application of the term "density" to McClure's assessment of the Scots elements of Ramsay's work is drawn from Corbett 1999, *Language of the Scottish Nation*, 101.

<sup>49</sup> Daiches 1955, *Vernacular Poetry*, 160.

<sup>50</sup> Ramsay 1724, *Tea-Table Miscellany*, 73.

<sup>51</sup> Ramsay 1724, *Tea-Table Miscellany*, 104.

Steve Newman, in his 2002 article ‘The Scots Songs of Allan Ramsay: “Lyrick” Transformation, Popular Culture, and the Boundaries of the Scottish Enlightenment’, characterises the *Miscellany* as “...blending English ideals of politeness with a Scottish tradition of song to transform the idea of Scottish culture as such”.<sup>52</sup> This blending is evident in the language of the song texts given above. In contrast, those texts that Ramsay marks as “old songs” or “old songs with additions” tend not to exhibit the neo-classical traits of the newly composed songs, see for example the text of ‘Scornfu’ Nansy’ in Appendix 2.<sup>53</sup>

It is important to note, however, that the audience of the *Miscellany* had already bought into the “English ideals of politeness” as Newman puts it. From the seventeenth century the Scots spoken by the aristocracy had undergone a degree of Anglicisation. A. J. Aitken has described increasing contact between the Scots and English aristocracy in the seventeenth century, including an increase in the numbers of cross-Border marriages, and the increase in the trend to take a London house amongst those who could afford to do so. Aitken’s study of the private correspondence of some of these families reveals their use of an increasingly anglicised Scots, the phonetic realisations of English such as “no” for “know” suggesting the use of an anglicised Scots in speech as well as in writing. Aitken writes that by the early eighteenth century,

...the formal or, in the language of the time, ‘polite’ speech of the social élite of Scotland was now expected to approximate to the southern English dialect....This was now the language of people with social pretensions and for discussing intellectual topics or speaking in formal circumstances. For some it must also have already become the usual informal or fully vernacular style. And a form of speech which mostly favoured traditional Scots usages....was now identified with conservatives, eccentrics and, especially, ‘the common people’ or ‘the vulgar’.<sup>54</sup>

Robert Sibbald wrote in 1710 that there were different varieties of speech; that spoken by the common people, or the “vulgar” which was referred to as “Broad Scots”, and

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<sup>52</sup> Newman 2002, *Scots Songs of Allan Ramsay*, 282.

<sup>53</sup> ‘Lucky Nansy’ (marked as an old song with additions) presents an exception to this trend with its references to Venus and Cupid in the first verse.

<sup>54</sup> Aitken 1979, *Scottish Speech*, 91-93.

“...the refined Language of the Gentry, which the more Polite People among us do use, and is made up of Saxon, French and Latin Words”<sup>55</sup>. It seems likely that the audience of the *Miscellany* would have approached the unblended Scots texts as examples of the language that they used to speak.

In addition to this sense of Scots being the language of the past that had been replaced by English, Scots was seen as being an older language than English. In philological studies this mapping of new and old, onto polite and vulgar, and onto English and Scots also appeared. Scots and English were seen by many commentators as having shared medieval origins but that the English had, as one writer put it “from affectation and false refinement, had weakened, and even corrupted their language...” over time.<sup>56</sup> The implication of such statements is that Scots was the opposite: an old language, and a natural and simple one.

For those readers with an interest in philology the difference between the blended new texts and the largely unblended “old” texts would have added weight to the perception that the “old” texts were indeed, to some extent, old. The contrast between the different types of language used in the “old” and new songs in the *Miscellany* may have had further connotations of simplicity, naturalness and artlessness, the features that Ramsay explicitly draws out in terms of tunes in the 1729 edition of the *Miscellany*. The highlighting of those texts Ramsay labelled as “old” through the differing language of the new texts in a way specific to the Scottish context works, then, in tandem with ideas about the nature of the past in general to further reinforce Ramsay’s argument that the defining characteristics of ancient Scots songs and melodies were their simplicity, pastorality and naturalness.

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<sup>55</sup> *The History of the Sheriffdoms of Fife and Kinross* (Edinburgh 1710) pp. 15; 16, cited in Aitken 1979, *Scottish Speech*, 93-94.

<sup>56</sup> Kidd 2008, *Union and Unionisms*, 154-155. Kidd cites the character Lismahagow from Tobias Smollett’s 1771 novel *The Voyage of Humphry Clinker*.

### 3.4. Conclusion

In his 1724 and 1729 editions of *The Tea-Table Miscellany* Allan Ramsay was the first to state in print that Scottish songs and melodies were “old” and “ancient”. Ramsay’s characterisation of his purportedly historic material as simple, brief, artless and natural shows parallels with contemporary London perceptions of “Scotch” songs, but also with contemporary perceptions of the nature of pastoral poetry, a genre perceived to have strong links to the past. These characteristics would have been reinforced in the perceptions of the contemporary audience by Ramsay’s contrast with Italian music and by the contrast in the language of the new and “old” texts in the collection. The features that Ramsay drew out as characteristic of this historic material were a product of broader contemporary perceptions.

*The Tea-Table Miscellany* was a hugely influential publication in terms of canonising a repertoire of song which was republished and enjoyed by its users throughout the eighteenth century. In terms of music history it was influential in labelling that body of song as historic and so delineating a major source group for writers on Scottish music history right into the nineteenth century. The features that Ramsay drew out as characteristic of ancient Scottish music were key to later theorising about the historic nature of Scottish song. For this reason the wider cultural context of Ramsay’s depiction of the Scottish musical past in the 1720s, combining ideas about the past in general with ideas specific to the Scottish context, is important to an understanding of the writing of Scottish music history throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

#### **4. Enlightenment Models of Historical Progress and the Continued Perception that Scots Songs were “Ancient”**

In 1779 William Tytler first published his ‘Dissertation on the Scottish Musick’ as an anonymous appendix to Hugo Arnot’s *History of Edinburgh*. In the opening paragraphs he set out the purpose of the essay: “I am prompted in this essay to try if I can fix the aera of our most ancient melodies, and trace the history of our musick down to modern times”.<sup>1</sup> Despite the apparent inclusiveness of the term “musick”, it soon becomes clear that by “musick” Tytler actually only means to focus on the melodies associated with song. He begins the body of his essay by defining the characteristics of “The most ancient of our songs still preserved”. Having noted the defining characteristics he writes that “By this artless standard, several of our oldest Scots melodies may be traced; such as *Gil Morris*, - *There cam’ a ghost to Marg’ret’s door...*” (625). He goes on to use “song” and “melody” interchangeably throughout his essay, the melodies in question always being those associated with songs. Other types of music are not discussed, as far as Tytler is concerned; the history of Scottish music is synonymous with the history of Scots songs.

Tytler attempts to create a chronology of song based on his perceptions of the relative level of simplicity of different melodic features. Tytler characterises those songs he designates as the oldest as consisting of “the plain diatonick scale, without using the semitones, or sharps or flats” and making “constant use of the concordant tones, the third and fifth of the scale, often ending upon the fifth, and some of them on the sixth of the scale”. Such melodies “must have been composed for a very simple instrument, such, perhaps, as the shepherd’s pipe” (625). This first period ends with the reign of James I. Tytler characterises James I as an innovator in music. He argues that since James I played the harp, which had an extended compass and the ability to play all of the notes of the diatonic scale, this must have led to innovations in song writing. In consequence, the songs of the next period can be identified by their “more refined and regular modulation of composition”, “greater extent of notes” and “division...into semitones” (631-633).

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<sup>1</sup> Tytler 1779, *Dissertation*, 624. Subsequent references to this publication will appear in parentheses in the main text.

Tytler characterises the songs of his third period, between the reigns of James IV and Queen Mary, as “a still more refined modulation” and “an artful modulation used in the introduction of the seventh of the key” (633).

The songs that Tytler divides up into his chronology in this way were those which had been published by Ramsay and his followers. ‘Hap me wi’ thy pettycoat’, which Ramsay assigned to his earliest period, prior to James I, had been published in the *Tea-Table Miscellany* in 1724, for example. The songs Tytler assigns to the reign of James I onwards include ‘Will ye go to the ewe-burghts, Marion’, ‘Gilderoy’ and ‘The Gaberlunye Man’, all of which had also appeared in the 1724 edition of the *Miscellany*. Other songs had previously been published in collections such as the *Caledonian Pocket Companion* and *Orpheus Caledonius*.<sup>2</sup> Tytler presents, then, a more extended discussion of the history of the same sort of Scots songs which had been labelled as historic by Ramsay some fifty years earlier.

The close of Tytler’s essay shows that he was not simply concerned with the antiquarian aspect of this repertoire. His attention to performance practice acknowledges the importance of the singing of such songs amongst the readers of books such as the *History of Edinburgh*. He argues that “A Scots song can only be sung in taste by a Scots voice”. He makes an exception, however, for one notable Italian: “Who could hear with insensibility, or without being moved in the greatest degree, Tenducci sing, - I’ll never leave thee, - or the Braes of Ballendine!” He recommends the “plain, thin, dropping bass on the harpsichord or guitar” as an accompaniment to song, with an opening and concluding “symphony” if the players have the ability. Finally, he frowns upon the use of cadential ornamentation by singers, with the exception of “an easy shake” (639-640).

Having set out his aims at the beginning of his essay Tytler notes the available sources for writing the history of song: “In a path so untroden, where scarce a track is to be seen to

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<sup>2</sup> See Ramsay 1724, *Tea-Table Miscellany*, 62, 116, 92 and 160 respectively. ‘Gil Morice’ and ‘Tak’ your auld cloak about ye’ are amongst those which had appeared in the *Caledonian Pocket Companion*. ‘Hero and Leander’, ‘Waly waly up the bank’, ‘Cromlet’s Lilt’ and ‘The bonnie Earle of Murray’ were published in *Orpheus Caledonius*.

lead the way, the surest guide I have to follow is the musick itself, and a few authorities from our history" (624). A close examination of the "a few authorities from our history" reveals that the majority used by Tytler make no reference to song at all. A good example is provided by Tytler's discussion of the musical abilities of James I. Tytler spends some time quoting historical authorities such as John of Fordun and John Mair on the superior musical abilities of James the first.<sup>3</sup> He then uses the idea that James was a good performer on the harp and lute to suggest he was responsible for the increased complexity of song from his reign onwards. Although the musical abilities of James I are supported by "authorities from our history", the perception of increased complexity of song is not. This perception is drawn from Tytler's examination of "the musick itself".

Tytler presents a typical example of the main concerns of writers on Scottish music history in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: he writes the history of songs that were being used for domestic music-making; the songs themselves form his major source of information about the characteristic features of the music of the past, and other types of source, when they are used, are simply used to provide support.

The continued focus on the history of Scots songs amongst later eighteenth-century writers was not simply blindly following Ramsay, whose work came to be viewed with some criticism. Ramsay's work remained important in the writing of Scottish music history, however: the features of Scots songs that Ramsay had drawn out as typical and indicative of their antiquity matched the features of early societies in the Enlightenment model of universal historical progress from simple and pastoral to complex and commercial. The body of Scots songs inherited from Ramsay could thus continue to be seen as ancient. The impact of the Enlightenment model of historical progress on Scottish music history went far beyond the continued perception that Scots songs were ancient, however. The model also underpinned the collection of further purportedly ancient songs and ballads from the contemporary rural poor of the Highlands and Lowlands and Borders. In addition, the process of accommodating songs to the model led to the

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<sup>3</sup> Tytler, in common with other writers at the time, uses the name "John Major" rather than "John Mair". The conventional modern spelling "Mair" is, however, used throughout this thesis –see Broadie 2004, *John Mair*.

creation of a number of narratives of Scottish music history, one of which we have already seen in the work of Tytler, outlined above. These impacts of the Enlightenment model of historical progress will be examined in this chapter, and will be argued to show the impact of internationally held ideas about universal historical development on the writing of Scottish music history. In the following chapters efforts to accommodate Scots songs and ballads within the model which combine ideas about the universal nature of the past and specific Scottish historical circumstances will be discussed. The Enlightenment model will therefore be argued to be fundamental to the writing of Scottish music history from the later eighteenth century in ways far beyond simply underpinning the continued sense of the antiquity of Scots songs.

#### **4.1.Perceptions of Ramsay's Work**

As we have seen in chapter 2, the body of song published by Ramsay and those who followed him formed the major source for discussions of the Scottish music of the past. Moreover, as discussed in chapter 33, Allan Ramsay's characterisation of ancient songs mirrored characterisations of ancient pastoral poetry drawn out in contemporary discussions. It may have been because songs could be seen to embody the same characteristics musically that Ramsay was able to describe them as "old" or "ancient" material. Those writers who followed Ramsay in presenting and using much of the material, with some additions, that he had described as historic, were to some extent following a forty year-plus tradition of seeing this material as historic. Many writers acknowledged their debt to Ramsay, as we saw in chapter 3.

Like Ramsay, later writers continued to emphasise certain characteristics of the songs and ballads in their historical discussions: simplicity, pastorality and naturalness. Lord Kames, for example, writes of songs that:

The style of the music is wild and irregular, extremely pleasant to the natives, but little relished by the bulk of those who are accustomed to the regularity of the Italian style. None but men of genius, who study nature, and break loose from the thraldom of custom, esteem that music.

Hawkins writes that Scots melodies “retain that sweetness, delicacy, and native simplicity for which they are distinguished and admired”. Simplicity is also emphasised by Tytler, who describes his oldest class of song as “simple and void of all art”. Pinkerton notes simplicity as a feature as well, and Ramsay of Ochtertyre notes the “sweet touches of nature” included in ancient songs, and their naturalness and simplicity. Ritson argues that the “touches of nature and simplicity” to be found in songs are “not to be paralleled in more laboured or regular productions”. Alexander Campbell quotes Burney on the simplicity of ancient song in his 1798 publication, and also attributes the success of the Beggar’s Opera “to the peculiar simplicity and captivating powers of our national airs”. George Thomson draws out the simplicity and wildness of ancient song.<sup>4</sup>

Writers were not simply following Ramsay: by the later eighteenth century respect for the work of Ramsay was tempered by criticism. Pinkerton, in the second volume of his 1783 *Select Scotish Ballads*, for example, writes of Ramsay:

I must, however, observe that the genuine Old Songs, which were originally set to the most admired of the Scotish airs, are most of them unfortunately lost. For the present words to the greater part of them we are indebted to Allan Ramsay, and his friends, as he himself informs us in the following words of the preface to his Tea-table Miscellany...

He goes on, however, to criticise Ramsay and his friends for writing new words:

I heartily wish honest Allan and his ingenious young gentlemen had rather used their endeavours to recover and preserve the real ancient ballads, than to compose new ones. For uncouth as those might be, I much suspect they exceeded their substitutes in variety at least.<sup>5</sup>

Ramsay of Ochtertyre similarly saw problems with the work Ramsay had done in the past:

If in the *Evergreen*, he rashly attempted to improve some of his originals, in all probability he used still greater freedoms with the songs and ballads, not a

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<sup>4</sup> Home 1774, *Sketches*, 166; Hawkins 1776, *General History* Vol. 4, 6; Tytler 1779, *Dissertation*, 625; Pinkerton 1781, *Scottish Tragic Ballads*, xxv, xxvi; Runcole [John Ramsay of Ochtertyre] 1791, *On Scottish Songs*, 204, 208; Ritson 1794, *Scotish Song*, lxxx; Campbell 1798, *Introduction to History of Poetry*, 5, 11; Thomson 1822, *Select Melodies of Scotland*, 5, 10, 13.

<sup>5</sup> Pinkerton 1783, *Select Scotish Ballads*, Vol. 2, xxvii-xxviii.

few of which had been transmitted from one generation to another by tradition. What polish or variations, he, or his fellow-editors, thought proper to give these pieces, cannot be known, till manuscripts older than the present century shall be produced....With great judgement, he left the old songs, at least, their original garb; but in those that are printed among his works, he appears to have aimed at dressing them up in an English idiom, the chief Scotticisms being the sounds of the vowels and the softening of certain consonants.<sup>6</sup>

Ramsay of Ochtertyre presents Allan Ramsay as the saviour of ancient material, but noted a problem with the lack of information about where Ramsay had sourced his material:

From what sources he procured them, whether from manuscripts or books not generally known, or from the memory of the aged, may perhaps be explained by some persons still alive, well acquainted with the story of our Scottish Theocritus. Had it not been for the seasonable interposition of him and his friends, a number of old songs would soon have perished irrecoverably (207).

Ritson describes Ramsay's work in the *Miscellany* in strongly negative terms as:

...reprehensible, not only on account of the liberties he appears to have taken with many of the earlier pieces he published, in printing them with additions, which one is unable to distinguish, but also for preferring [*sic*] songs written by himself, or the “ingenious young gentlemen” who assisted him, to ancient and original words, which would in many cases, all circumstances considered, have been probably superior, or, at least, much more curious, and which are now irretrievable.<sup>7</sup>

Alexander Campbell, Like Ritson, described Ramsay as having taken “unwarrantable liberties” with the material.<sup>8</sup> The only writer to present Ramsay's changes in a slightly more positive light is Richard Hartley Cromeck who describes how Ramsay had:

...rekindled the smothered embers of Lyric Poetry – but he could not redeem the lost treasures of past ages; nor rake from the ashes of the fallen religion the sacred reliques of its songs. A few were redeemed - but they were trimmed anew, and laced with the golden thread of metaphysic foppery, over the coarse and homely hoddingray of rural industry. Their naïveté of feeling –

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<sup>6</sup> Runcole [John Ramsay of Ochtertyre] 1791, *On Scottish Songs*, 207-208.

<sup>7</sup> Ritson 1794, *Scotish Song*, lxiii-lxvi.

<sup>8</sup> Campbell 1798, *Introduction to History of Poetry*, 11.

their humour and amiable simplicity now gave way to the gilded and varnished trappings and tasselings of courtly refinement.<sup>9</sup>

The difficulty that Pinkerton had noted in knowing what historic songs had been like prior to Ramsay was also alluded to by John Leyden in 1801. Leyden described the contents of an “MS. collection of airs adapted to the Lyra Viol, written soon after the Revolution” concluding that the importance of the manuscript was in that: “The MS. Collection which I have quoted, is not indeed to great antiquity; but as it approaches the æra of the Revolution, it enables us to advance a step beyond Ramsay”.<sup>10</sup>

In the light of such criticism of the work of Ramsay, and the value that Enlightenment culture placed on questioning the claims of past ages, Scottish music historians from the late eighteenth century onwards were faced with a problem: they had very little firm evidence that Ramsay’s songs were of any great antiquity. Tytler had raised the problem in his 1779 ‘Dissertation’: “In a path so untroden, where scarce a track is to be seen to lead the way, the surest guide I have to follow is the musick itself, and a few authorities from our history” (624). Ramsay of Ochtertyre in 1791 described the absence of such songs from manuscripts such as the sixteenth-century Bannatyne and Maitland MSS as “Circumstances that seem to impeach the high antiquity of these admired lays”,<sup>11</sup> and some thirty years later, in 1822, George Thomson was still considering the same problem:

What has already been said, applies to those airs which appear to have been of some standing in the time of Allan Ramsay, or of which historical notices are to be found of a still earlier date. There are, besides these, however, a great many airs, of which nothing whatever is historically known, and whose antiquity must be judged of entirely by internal evidence. A number of these airs speak for themselves, being evidently so modern in their style and structure, that it is impossible to doubt that they are mere imitations, composed during the eighteenth century. Others, again, are marked with all the peculiarities of the national scale and character; and, though this renders it more than probable that they are old airs, yet it does not positively prove them to be so, because it is very possible for a modern composer, who is

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<sup>9</sup> Cromek 1810, *Remains*, iv.

<sup>10</sup> Leyden 1801, *Complaynt*, 285-286.

<sup>11</sup> Runcole [John Ramsay of Ochtertyre] 1791, *On Scottish Songs*, 205.

acquainted with the peculiar characters of our melodies, to imitate them very exactly.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the lack of evidence, writers continued to see the body of song canonised by Ramsay as ancient. Contemporary thought about the nature of past societies presented the solution to the problem of the lack of evidence, since the features identified by Ramsay, and which continued to be seen as characteristic of Scots songs, could be aligned with the early stages of the prevailing model of historical development.

#### **4.2. Enlightenment Ideas about the Nature of History and the Continued Perception that Ramsay's Songs were Ancient**

A primary concern of the Scottish Enlightenment was the empirical study of man himself. Enlightenment thinkers sought to understand human nature and society with the aim of being able to improve society in the future. Knowledge of history and of other contemporary societies was important to this project because it increased the data on human nature and society available to study.<sup>13</sup> As Adam Ferguson put it, "Whatever proofs we may have of the disposition of man in familiar and contiguous scenes, it is possibly of importance, to draw our observations from the examples of men who live in the simplest condition, and who have not learned to affect what they do not actually feel".<sup>14</sup> History became an important aspect of a number of different types of enquiry, and in consequence the development of Enlightenment historiographical thought can be traced through thinkers considered today as the progenitors of modern disciplines as diverse as economics and sociology.

"The total mass of human kind...advances ever, though slowly, towards greater perfection" wrote the French writer Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot, Baron de Laune in his 1750 *A Philosophical Review of the Successive Advances of the Human Mind*. Seen by some as the founding philosopher of the idea of progress, Turgot described "a chain of causes and effects which unite the existing state of the world with all that has gone before".<sup>15</sup> This

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<sup>12</sup> Thomson 1822, *Select Melodies of Scotland*, 12.

<sup>13</sup> Broadie 2001, *Scottish Enlightenment*, 55-56, 62.

<sup>14</sup> Adam Ferguson, *Essay*, 23, cited in Broadie 2001, *Scottish Enlightenment*, 84.

<sup>15</sup> Cited in Nisbet 1980, *Progress*, 179-180.

idea of the progressive nature of mankind was a key one of the Scottish Enlightenment: Adam Ferguson asserted that “man is susceptible to improvement and has in himself a principle of progression”; Millar wrote that “in man a disposition and capacity for improving his condition”; and Adam Smith “the natural effort of every individual to better his own condition” is “a powerful principle”.<sup>16</sup>

Human progress was perceived to begin in a state of savagery, the simplest state of society. The characteristics of this state of savagery could be seen, so Enlightenment thinkers believed, by looking at contemporary savages. Adam Ferguson wrote of Arab clans and American tribes “that we are to behold, as in a mirror, the features of our own progenitors, and from thence we are to draw conclusions with respect to the influence of situations, in which, we have reason to believe, our fathers were placed”.<sup>17</sup> Aspects of the state of savagery could also be inferred from observations of how humans in general experienced the world. The seventeenth-century philosopher John Locke argued that children experience the world through their senses, and so their first ideas are those which relate directly to those sensed experiences. Once these ideas have been formed, further ideas abstracted from actual sensed experiences are possible, since these can build on the earlier ideas. Locke saw savages, people in the infancy of society, as like actual infants in this way. This idea was taken up by Enlightenment historians such as William Robertson, who in his *History of America*, first published in 1777 wrote:

As the individual advances from the ignorance and imbecility of the infant state to vigour and maturity of understanding, something similar to this may be observed in the progress of the species. With respect to it, too, there is a period of infancy, during which several powers of the mind are not unfolded, and all are feeble and defective in their operation. In the early ages of society, while the condition of man is simple and rude, his reason is but little exercised, and his desires move within a very narrow sphere. Hence arise two remarkable characteristics of the human mind in this state. Its intellectual powers are extremely limited; its emotions and efforts are few and languid.

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<sup>16</sup> All cited in Berry 1997, *Social Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment*, 70.

<sup>17</sup> Ferguson, *Civil Society*, 80-80, cited in Spadafora 1990, *Idea of Progress*, 267.

Both these distinctions are conspicuous among the rudest and most unimproved of the American tribes...<sup>18</sup>

Primitive man, then, had few desires, few thoughts beyond his immediate experience, and limited emotions.

A further characteristic of primitive society was its perceived lack of social restraints on the expression of emotion. In his 1995 article Coltharp characterizes the thought of Thomas Blackwell in his 1735 *An Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer* as contrasting “the passionnal freedom of savagery with the social restraint of modern civilization”.<sup>19</sup> Adam Ferguson seems to allude to similar ideas when he suggested in his 1767 *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* that the early attitudes of man regarding society could be best investigated by “observations from the example of men who live in the simplest condition, and who have not learned to affect what they do not actually feel”.<sup>20</sup>

As mankind developed, their circumstances became more varied, and their manners more complicated. Enlightenment thinkers correlated diversification and complication with progress, knowledge and civilised manners, and uniformity and simplicity with ignorance and rudeness.<sup>21</sup> Hugh Millar expressed part of this correlation in the 1779 edition of his *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*: “There is thus, in human society, a natural progress from ignorance to knowledge, and from rude to civilized manners, the several stages of which are usually accompanied with peculiar laws and customs”.<sup>22</sup>

The beliefs that human nature was universal and that human nature acted upon by specific conditions would produce similar types of society allowed the development of theories of universal processes of historical progress. From the 1750s Scottish thinkers formulated what has come to be known as “Stadial theory” following the terminology

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<sup>18</sup> William Robertson, *History of America*, 819, cited in Berry 1997, *Social Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment*, 91-92.

<sup>19</sup> Coltharp 1995, *History and the Primitive*, 58..

<sup>20</sup> Cited in Broadie 2001, *Scottish Enlightenment*, 83-84.

<sup>21</sup> Berry 1997, *Social Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment*, 65.

<sup>22</sup> Hugh Millar 1779 *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 5, cited in Meek 1976, *Ignoble Savage*, 164.

used by the later reporter on the Enlightenment, Dugald Stewart. Stadialism was the theory that human societies evolved through a series of identifiable stages, each with distinctive features.<sup>23</sup> The most well-known expression of stadial theory is that advanced by Adam Smith. The recovery of student notes for his Glasgow lectures of the 1760s suggest also that he was one of the first to advance the theory in the form in which it was used so widely later in the century.<sup>24</sup> Smith argued that human society advanced through four clear stages, each based on the mode of subsistence: the “four stages of society are hunting, pasturage, farming and commerce”.<sup>25</sup> Although Smith based his stages on the mode of subsistence, other thinkers took a broader view. As David Spadafora summarises in his 1990 study *The Idea of Progress in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, “regardless of the principle or principles according to which they periodized history, all of the Scots agreed with Millar that there was in the course of civilization a series of complicated, interrelated changes encompassing every aspect of life and amounting to a transition from rudeness to refinement”. He quotes William Robertson as a typical view: in “every part of the earth, the progress of man hath been nearly the same; and we can trace him in his career from the rude simplicity of savage life, until he attains the industry, the arts, and the elegance of polished society”.<sup>26</sup> As Ronald Meek puts it in his 1976 study *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage*, “By 1780 this guiding principle had become so important an element in the intellectual scheme of things, so much an integral part of the social thought of the Enlightenment, that there were very few historians and social thinkers who remained unaffected by it”.<sup>27</sup>

An example of the appearance of the model in the history of manners and culture is provided by Hugh Blair’s *Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian* of 1763. Blair argued that “the most natural pictures of ancient manners are exhibited in the ancient

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<sup>23</sup> Allan 2002, *Scotland in the Eighteenth Century*, 148.

<sup>24</sup> Meek identifies earlier expressions of the theory in the published work of Sir John Dalrymple and Lord Kames in the late 1750s, but argues that Smith may have been propounding the theory in lectures in Edinburgh and Glasgow in the early 1750s. Meek 1976, *Ignoble Savage*, 99-113.

<sup>25</sup> Adam Smith, Lectures on Jurisprudence, cited in Spadafora 1990, *Idea of Progress*, 271.

<sup>26</sup> Spadafora 1990, *Idea of Progress*, 272 – 273.

<sup>27</sup> Meek 1976, *Ignoble Savage*, 174.

poems of nations". Amongst the ancient poems produced in different places similarities would be observed, since:

in a similar state of manners, similar objects and passions operating upon the imaginations of men, will stamp their productions with the same general character. Some diversity will, no doubt, be occasioned by climate and genius. But mankind never bear such resembling features, as they do in the beginnings of society.

The content of the poems of Ossian showed that they came from one of the earlier stages of society: "There are four great stages through which men successively pass in the progress of society. The first and earliest is the life of hunters; pasturage succeeds to this, as the ideas of property begin to take root; next, agriculture; and lastly, commerce. Throughout Ossian's poems, we plainly find ourselves in the first of these periods of society; during which hunting was the chief employment of men and the principal method of their procuring subsistence".<sup>28</sup>

Enlightenment historiography, in summary, relied on the idea of progress. Historical progress was from a rude, ignorant, barbarous and savage state of nature to eighteenth-century refined and civilised society. In the state of nature man had few preoccupations, few restrictions and his emotions were strongly expressed. Societies were seen to develop through a series of stages each with their own identifiable characteristics: hunter-gatherer, pasturage, agriculture and commerce. Writers such as Hugh Blair described the effect of these states of society on, and their reflection in ancient poetry.

Examination of the writings on Scottish music history from the later part of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries reveals a number of the elements of this Enlightenment model of historical thought. The continuing perception that the characteristic features of Scots songs were those identified by Ramsay, namely their simplicity, pastorality and naturalness, has already been outlined above. The writings of Tytler, Ramsay of Ochtertyre and Campbell show the way that these features meant that

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<sup>28</sup> Hugh Blair, *Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian, the Son of Fingal* (London, 1763), 1, 4, 16-17, cited in Meek 1976, *Ignoble Savage*, 180.

songs could be slotted neatly into the early stages of the model of historical development outlined in the previous section.

For William Tytler, for example, the simplicity of melodies suggests that their origins were in an early, pastoral, form of society: “The simplicity and wildness of several of our old Scottish melodies, denote them to be the production of a pastoral age and country, and prior to the use of any musical instrument beyond that of a very limited scale of a few natural notes, and prior to the knowledge of any rules of artificial music”.<sup>29</sup> His reference to the shepherd’s pipe as the limiting factor on the range of the earliest tunes also suggests this pastoral milieu.<sup>30</sup> That Tytler perceived the music of all early societies to begin in such a way is indicated by his statement that “The origin of music, in every country, is from the woods and lawns”.<sup>31</sup> Tytler attributes a small increase in the complexity of melodies to the change to a more advanced form of society: the age of chivalry and feudalism presided over by James I to James V saw the introduction of the semitones into song as a result of the harp and lute playing of James I and the compositions of minstrels.<sup>32</sup>

Ramsay of Ochtertyre similarly describes songs as “the language of pure nature” and “unaffected”, arguing that “some subjects are brought into open view, which a more artful painter would have thrown into shade”. He attributes these characteristics to the origins of the songs in a pastoral “state of society”.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Tytler 1783, *Poetical Remains*, 197-198.

<sup>30</sup> Tytler 1779, *Dissertation*, 625; Tytler 1783, *Poetical Remains*, 198.

<sup>31</sup> Tytler 1783, *Poetical Remains*, 197-198.

<sup>32</sup> Tytler 1779, *Dissertation*, 632-633. Tytler’s statement that the popularity of the harp led to the introduction of semitones into Scottish music contrasts with Franklin’s perception that the use of the harp accounted for the absence of semitones (see chapter 2). This raises questions about perceptions of the types of harps used in the past: would Franklin and Tytler simply have disagreed over the nature of the harps of the past, or do Franklin’s minstrel harpers represent a different musical milieu to Tytler’s picture of the courtly playing of James I? The second conclusion would to, to some extent, be undermined by Tytler’s references to the “sylvan minstrels” who furthered the innovations brought about by James I’s harp playing. While such questions remain open to debate, the difference between Franklin and Tytler’s perceptions of the harp does show that, although the focus of most writer’s work was this history of song, their perceptions of song were part of broader perceptions of the music of the past.

<sup>33</sup> Runcole [John Ramsay of Ochtertyre] 1791, *On Scottish Songs*, 204-206.

Alexander Campbell, like Tytler, sees a relationship between the history of song and stages of social development: his purpose in ‘A Conversation on Scotish Song’ is to “trace its progress, as found in a rude, to a more civilized state of society”. Later he defines Scots song as “marking the character, and occupations of a rude people, in their progress to civilization”.<sup>34</sup>

Despite late eighteenth century criticism of Ramsay’s methods, then, the body of song that he had published could continue to form the basis of discussions about the history of Scottish music because its characteristic features that he had identified, simplicity, naturalness and pastorality, meant that it could be easily aligned with the early stages of the prevailing historical trajectory.

#### **4.3. Enlightenment Models of History and Collecting New Sources for the History of Music**

In addition to the writers on Scottish music history who continued to present and discuss the Scots songs from *The Tea-Table Miscellany* with some additions, there were a body of writers on Scottish music history who used newly collected material. Not only did they gain some or all of their material by collecting, this group of writers also discuss the methods of collecting as important parts of their historical discussions. As has already been noted, these collectors tend to portray their work as adding to the body of Scots song canonised by Ramsay and his followers. Collectors tended to collect their material from the rural areas south of the central belt and the Borders, or from the Highlands: Scott, Cromeck and Motherwell collected Lowland and Border material; the McDonalds and Campbell collected from the Highlands.

The commentary which accompanies McDonald’s *A Collection of Highland Vocal Airs* emphasises the perceived primitive nature of the groups from whom the material was collected. For example, in ‘View of the Poetry and Music of the Highlanders’, Ramsay of Ochtertyre ties the preservation of song in the Highlands to their primitive state of society. He makes the overarching statements that “In the first ages of society, the poet and

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<sup>34</sup> Campbell 1798, *Introduction to History of Poetry*, 2, 9.

musician were commonly one and the same", and that music and poetry were especially good in "rude and barbarous nations".<sup>35</sup> Highlanders in particular maintain "this remnant of primeval manners" since their "manners have been stationary, ever since the northern nations quitted their coasts" (8, 14). William Skene, although not a collector himself, makes a similar point regarding Highlanders in 1837: "Where a national disposition towards poetry and recitation is exhibited by a primitive people, the sister art of music is seldom found to be wanting, and accordingly the Highlanders have at all times possessed a peculiarly strong inclination for melody".<sup>36</sup>

Such explicit statements of the primitive nature of the groups from whom songs and ballads were collected are rare in the commentaries which accompany Lowland/Border collections. In part, collectors' interest in the Lowlands and Borders might be explained by the characteristics of the songs inherited from Ramsay and his followers which provided the stimulus to collecting: as Beattie noted in 1776, "Several of the old Scotch songs take their names from the rivulets, villages, and hills, adjoining to the Tweed near Melrose", and Ramsay of Ochtertyre noted in 1791 that "The scene of the finest pastoral songs is commonly laid upon the Tweed, or some of its tributary streams".<sup>37</sup> Yet the appearance of statements such as "The more rude and wild the state of society, the more general and violent is the impulse received from poetry and music", which opens Walter Scott's 1802 *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*,<sup>38</sup> shortly followed by "For similar reasons, flowing from the state of society, the reader must not expect to find in the Border ballads, refined sentiment, and, far less, elegant expression" (xc-xcv), show that collectors of Lowland and Border songs and ballads were influenced by ideas about the stadial progress of societies. Cromeck presents another example of the appearance of ideas about the stadial progress of societies, lamenting the loss of historic material as a consequence of the transition to advanced commercial society: "The old cottars....are mostly dead in good old age; and their children are pursuing the bustle of commerce,

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<sup>35</sup> [John Ramsay of Ochtertyre] 1784, *Influence of Poetry and Music*, 11 and 12.

<sup>36</sup> Skene 1837, *Highlanders of Scotland*, 215.

<sup>37</sup> Beattie 1776, *Essays*, 483; Runcole [John Ramsay of Ochtertyre] 1791, *On Scottish Songs*, 203.

<sup>38</sup> Scott 1802, *Minstrelsy*, xc. Subsequent references will be indicated in parentheses in the main text.

frequently in foreign climates".<sup>39</sup> Later, he describes the songs in his collection as "the delight of a simple and pastoral age" (xxx).

In this context, Scot's collection of purportedly ancient songs and ballads from "shepherds also, and aged persons, in the recesses of the Border mountains"(c-ci) appears to show the same type of thinking as that of Ramsay of Ochtertyre regarding Highland music: ancient music was perceived to have been preserved amongst those who maintained an earlier form of society, in this case, societies still in the pastoral phase. It was not simply in terms of collecting that contemporary shepherds were seen as a good source for Scottish music history. In his 1801 publication Leyden refers to shepherd boys and uses these as a source of information about instruments. A number of the instruments listed in the pastoral scenes in the sixteenth-century *The Complaynt of Scotland* are illustrated by reference to contemporary late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century shepherd boys: the "pipe maid of ane bleddir and of ane reid", the "trump", and the "corne pipe".<sup>40</sup> Dauney similarly uses evidence drawn from contemporary shepherds and their instruments in his historical discussion.<sup>41</sup> Such use of the practice of contemporary shepherds as a source of information about the past reinforces the idea that collectors looked to rural Lowland and Border societies, rather than other groups, in their quest for further ancient songs and ballads, because contemporary Lowland and Border rural society was perceived as maintaining an earlier state of society.

Like the group of writers who followed Ramsay, this group of collectors of both Lowland/Border and Highland song had little other evidence to support their assertions that the material contained in their collections was ancient. The notes they often provide to illustrate their songs and ballads tend to give further details on the historic personages and events depicted, but no consideration of possible post-event composition.

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<sup>39</sup> Crome 1810, *Remains*, xxi.

<sup>40</sup> Leyden 1801, *Complaynt*, 152-153.

<sup>41</sup> Dauney 1838, *Ancient Scottish Melodies*, 130-131. It should be noted that Dauney draws heavily on the work of Leyden in this passage.

The collection of purportedly historic material from the Borders and Highlands appears to have been underpinned by a perception that such societies represented an arrested state of social development: they had been left behind by the progress to civilisation of Scottish metropolitan society. The collection of historic material was, then, underpinned by the same model of social development which underpinned the continuing consideration of the body of song canonised by Ramsay as historic.

#### **4.4. Enlightenment Ideas about Historical Progress and the Creation of Music-Historical Narrative**

The impact of the prevailing model of historical development on the writing of Scottish music history from the second half of the eighteenth century goes far beyond the selection of Ramsay's and newly collected Scots songs and ballads as source materials, however. The process of accommodating Scots songs and ballads into the historical model gave rise to a number of music-historical narratives.

Tytler, as outlined at the beginning of the chapter, for example, presents a narrative of musical development from perceived simple to complex scale forms aligned with the development of society from pastoral to commercial forms over Scotland's history. George Thomson similarly creates a narrative to explain the development of scale types from the simplest form, the diatonic scale lacking the fourth and seventh, to the more complex form which included the flat seventh:

There is something, however, so natural and pleasing in sliding from the sixth to the flat seventh, while it has such a melancholy and sighing expression, that a minstrel of more than ordinary refinement and feeling may have easily hit upon it, in a moment of inspiration, even at a very early period of the art.<sup>42</sup>

Such events formed part of the “Gradual result of theoretical deduction and practical improvement” which had led to the development of the musical scale of Thomson’s day (3).

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<sup>42</sup> Thomson 1822, *Select Melodies of Scotland*, 7.

Motherwell, in his 1827 *Minstrelsy: Ancient and Modern*, presents a similar narrative of gradually increasing refinement with regard to the development of ballad forms:

As society advanced in refinement, and the rudeness and simplicity of earlier ages partially disappeared, the Historick Ballad, like the butterfly bursting the crust of its chrysalis state, and expanding itself in wigner pride under the gladdening and creative influence of warmer suns and more genial skies, became speedily transmuted into the Romance of Chivalry.

He supports this argument with further reference to the idea that all societies progressed to refinement over time, although not necessarily all at the same rate:

That the Romance of Chivalry was the legitimate descendent of the Heroick Ballad, appears sufficiently obvious, from this single fact, that the taste for enjoying, and of course producing, these fictitious narratives, broke out in each country of Europe, as it successively arrived at that point of refinement, which required mental excitement to cherish and keep in activity its warlike and chivalrous propensities.<sup>43</sup>

It is also, however, the difficulties that writers experienced in fitting songs into the historical model which lead to the creation of music-historical narratives. The overarching importance of the framework provided by the prevailing historical model to writers of music history can be seen in the trouble George Thomson takes to account for the nature of perceived primitive musical cultures whose music does not conform to the criteria of simplicity expected. Drawing on the work of the earlier writers on scale types, discussed in chapter 2, Thomson extrapolates an ancient “national scale”. He describes this scale as “the modern diatonic scale, divested of the *fourth* and *seventh*”, and illustrates his point in staff notation with the scale of C major minus F<sup>♯</sup> and B<sup>♯</sup>. He argues that “every air (with a very few exceptions) which is really ancient, is constructed precisely according to this scale, and does not contain a single note which is foreign to it”. Even ancient airs which appeared on casual inspection to be different keys were, according to Thomson, in fact, constructed on this same scale, the appearance of being in

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<sup>43</sup> Motherwell 1827, *Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern*, xxxiv-xxxv.

different keys being a consequence of the tendency of “our primitive musicians” to “wander up and down the scale, forming such successions of notes, and dwelling or stopping on such parts of the scale as pleased them”. As a result,

Our old airs are found not always to close on what we call the key-note, but frequently on other parts of the scale...A considerable variety of character will be given to the airs, as they happen to rest chiefly, or close upon certain parts of the scale, which will thus become principal, or key-notes, and will give the airs the appearance of being composed in different keys, and in different modes, though they contain invariably no sounds but those in the simple series which has already been given.<sup>44</sup>

He goes on to present examples of the scales formed from the same series but starting on different notes (5), and follows this with notated examples of each drawn from the corpus of Scots songs such as ‘The Mucking of Geordie’s Byre’ and ‘Woo’d and Married and a’’ (6). Thomson concludes that:

The Scottish Melodies are constructed upon a scale which differs from the modern diatonic scale, in its wanting the fourth and seventh, from which it may be inferred, that it is natural to leave out these notes, and that their introduction into the modern scale is an artificial process.

He then supports his assertion that omitting the fourth and seventh is natural by arguing that “untaught” and “uneducated” singers find it difficult to sing these notes in tune, and finally that:

The same conclusion is still more remarkably confirmed by observing, not only that our national scale has been ascertained to be the same with that of various other countries, but that it appears to be precisely the same with the most ancient scale of the Greeks (7).

In the paragraphs which follow these assertions, Thomson presents examples of the music of other countries which conforms to this “national scale”: Highland vocal music “is of precisely the same structure in regard to its scale”, and “Most of the old Irish vocal

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<sup>44</sup> Thomson 1822, *Select Melodies of Scotland*, 4-5.

airs...are constructed according to the same scale with our own". Yet, with the exception of these examples, Thomson spends more time accounting for deviations from the "national scale". In the case of Welsh instrumental pieces, which "are more regular and extensive in their scale", Thomson accounts for this deviation in the following way: "The harp has been generally used in that country from a very remote period, and still continues to be so; and the natural consequence of the use of an instrument of such powers, is, that the Welch airs are almost as regular in their structure as modern compositions". The music of Italy is "exquisitely polished and elegant", in contrast to the "wildness" of ancient Scottish music because the "common classes, have made it their amusement to recite the poetry of Tasso". Like the Welsh, the Spanish tunes were "in general, perfectly smooth and regular, in so far as regards the succession of notes" because the guitar was extensively used. The harp again accounts for the "nice and difficult intonation" of the use of the sharp seventh in ancient Scandinavian music (7-8). The trouble Thomson takes to account for these apparent exceptions shows the importance of the idea that the early stages of society must always have exhibited the same simple forms of music in his thinking.

Thomson was not, however, the only writer to seek to explain apparent deviations from the historical model: writers sought to explain how songs which appeared to be too complex could still be ancient, and how songs which were being sung by members of advanced commercial society could be the remnants of the ancient music of earlier forms of society. In so doing they create the narratives of the gradual corruption of historic songs and narratives of differing modes of preservation over time that will be discussed in the next sections.

#### **4.4.1. Preservation and Corruption**

The perception that ancient material had been corrupted over time appears right from the beginning of the writing of Scottish music history, in the work of Allan Ramsay. In the preface to the 1729 edition of *The Tea-Table Miscellany* Ramsay characterises some of the songs in his collection as having been "done Time out of Mind, and only wanted to be

cleared from the Dross of blundering Transcribers and Printers".<sup>45</sup> The perception extends throughout the period in question, appearing in two slightly different forms: explicit statements that the material had been corrupted; and statements that the writer/editor had "corrected" the material, implying previous corruption of the material. Both the music and the text of songs were seen to have been corrupted.

If we return to Tytler's *Dissertation on the Scottish Music* with which this chapter opened, and look at those songs that Tytler describes as the oldest we find an interesting comment on the examples he gives as illustrative of this category. When giving the examples Tytler notes that the form of 'Hap me wi' thy Pettycoat' known to his readers is too complex to fit in with his criteria of simplicity, he describes it as "so modernized as scarce to have a trace of its ancient simplicity". He refers readers instead to the "simple, uncorrupted" form of the air which he characterises as preserved in manuscript in the 1779 version, and amongst "nurses in the country" in the 1783 version.<sup>46</sup>

The perception that material that was too refined to fit with the criteria of simplicity set out for the most ancient material had been corrupted appears again in the work of George Thomson. Thomson, like Tytler, attempts to place tunes into chronological order based on the degree to which they conform to the "national scale", a scale that Thomson characterises as "prompted by nature...containing the most simple and elementary sounds of the musical scale".<sup>47</sup> Having set out and illustrated the use of the scale as a means of confirming the antiquity of a number of well-known songs Thomson writes that:

In pursuing this investigation, there is another consideration very necessary to be attended to, that almost all the old airs, in the form in which they are now found in our collections, differ more or less from their primitive shape. In some few cases, the air is essentially altered, so that it can no longer be reconciled to the scale on which it was originally constructed; while, in all the other instances, the air is merely rendered smoother and more graceful, without any essential change in its structure.

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<sup>45</sup> Ramsay 1729, *Tea-Table Miscellany*, Dublin 1729, vi.

<sup>46</sup> Tytler 1779, *Dissertation*, 625; Tytler 1783, *Poetical Remains*, 198-199.

<sup>47</sup> Thomson 1822, *Select Melodies of Scotland*, 3. Subsequent references to this publication will appear in parentheses in the main text.

Taking ‘Ewe Burghts’ [sic] as an example, Thomson contrasts the older and the corrupted versions, writing of the older form found in *Orpheus Caledonius* “In that form, the melody is rude and ungraceful; and the air owes almost all its beauty to the refinement which it has borrowed from modern taste”. He concludes the passage with the statement that “it is perfectly easy, by observing, from the general tenor of an air, upon what variety of the scale it has been constructed, to divest it of all modern embellishment, and to discover with unerring certainty what must have been its primitive form” (13).

In this passage Thomson reveals a perception that the corruptions of ancient material consist of an increasing refinement, smoothing and embellishment of a rude, ungraceful, simple and unembellished older form. The ways in which the songs cited by Thomson deviated from ideas about musical simplicity challenged their inclusion into the most ancient categories of song, but by positing a process of corruption through increasing complexity over time, which itself relied on the same ideas about the progress of society, complex songs could continue to be seen as historic source materials.<sup>48</sup>

It was not just Lowland and Border song that was perceived to have undergone a process of corruption and degeneration over time. Patrick McDonald, for example, wrote of Highland music that:

In the Highlands of Scotland again, the harp has long ceased to be the favourite instrument; and, for upwards of a century, has been seldom heard. The encouragement of the people has been transferred to the bagpipe, an instrument more congenial to the martial spirit of the country. In consequence of this, many of the pieces, that had originally been composed, and had been chiefly performed or accompanied by the harpers, are irrecoverably lost: and those, which have been preserved by tradition, may naturally be supposed to have been gradually degenerating. To render these airs therefore more regular, especially in their measure, is, in fact, bringing them nearer to their original form.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Ritson presents a further example when he writes that “A few songs in the first class are indebted for original airs to the harmonious muse of the equally eminent and amiable Shield, whose taste and science had been occasionally exerted in restoring or preserving the genuine simplicity of a corrupted melody” (*Scotish Songs*, vi-vii).

<sup>49</sup> McDonald 1784, *Highland Vocal Airs*, 3-4.

Examples of explicit statements that texts too had been corrupted appear in the work of Herd, Pinkerton and Motherwell. Pinkerton for example wrote of the ballad ‘Child Maurice’, which had previously been published as ‘Gil Morrice’: “THIS is undoubtedly the true title of the incomparable Ballad, though corrupted into Gil Morrice by the nurses and old women, from whose mouths it was originally published”<sup>50</sup> Motherwell also perceives the ballad, which he gives as ‘Child Norice &c.’ to have been corrupted. He writes that:

any one familiar with the state in which traditionary poetry has been transmitted to the present times, can be at no less [sic] to detect many more “ingenious interpolations,” as well as paraphrastic additions in the ballad as now printed. But though it has been grievously corrupted in this way, the most scrupulous inquirer into the authenticity of ancient song can have no hesitation in admitting, that many of its verses, even as they now stand, are purely traditionary, and fair, and genuine parcels of antiquity, unalloyed with any base admixture of modern invention.<sup>51</sup>

As Thomson’s writing demonstrates, writers did not feel it necessary to refer to any other form of source material in order to support their perceptions that material had been corrupted by increasing refinement over time. Writers such as Thomson construct what appear to us to be beautifully circular arguments: songs must be old, therefore they must be simple and natural, if they do not conform to the criteria of simplicity and naturalness they must have been corrupted. Such manipulation of evidence shows again the importance of the underlying model: the idea that songs had been corrupted over time was necessary so that they conformed to the model of historical progress from simple and natural to complex and artificial. Such manipulation of evidence to make it fit the model of historical development leads writers to create a narrative of Scottish music history in which songs had been corrupted and had degenerated from a perfect form of origin over time.

#### **4.4.2. Parallel Traditions of Preservation**

As discussed above, the songs presented as examples of historic music by many writers were being sung by members of the metropolitan elite. The singing of such song by this

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<sup>50</sup> Pinkerton 1781, *Scottish Tragic Ballads*, 107. Herd presents his 1776 collection with “many stanzas and passages restored and corrected” (*Ancient and Modern Scottish Songs*, viii).

<sup>51</sup> Motherwell 1827, *Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern*, 260.

group is potentially a challenge to its portrayal as historic material because, under the model of historical progress outlined above, the commercial, metropolitan society of which the audience was a part was seen as the pinnacle of historical development. Following the model to its logical conclusion, commercial society should have moved on from the simple, pastoral, emotional music of the past, to refined music, like the Italian music that Allan Ramsay had contrasted with Scots songs in 1729.

The singing of purportedly historic Scots song by the metropolitan elite was, however, accommodated within the prevailing model of historical development by proposing two traditions of preservation, one amongst the rural poor, and the other amongst the metropolitan elite. The efforts that were necessary to accommodate the songs sung by the metropolitan elite demonstrate again the fundamental place of the belief that such song was historic in the writing of music history, and the importance of the prevailing model of historical development to the writing of Scottish music history. In addition, writer's efforts to accommodate the songs sung by the metropolitan elite as historic source materials lead them to create narratives of Scottish music history.

William Tytler presents a good example of the use of the idea of two parallel traditions of preservation to accommodate the singing of historic song by the metropolitan elite. Towards the end of his dissertation Tytler describes how "A maid, at her spinning-wheel, who knew not a note in musick, with a sweet voice, and the force of a native genius, has oft drawn tears from my eyes".<sup>52</sup> This maid is presented as a contrast to the elite singers to whom Tytler addresses the rest of his dissertation. In the 1783 version of the dissertation Tytler develops this distinction further in the process of justifying the inclusion of 'Hap me wi' thy Pettycoat' in the earliest class of songs. As we saw in the previous section, Tytler describes the version of the song known to his elite metropolitan audience as "so modernized as scarce to have a trace of its ancient simplicity". 'Hap me wi' thy Pettycoat' can be considered one of the earliest songs, according to Tytler, however, because the "the simple original air" sung by the "nurses in the country" shares

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<sup>52</sup> Tytler 1779, *Dissertation*, 641.

the characteristics of his earliest class of song.<sup>53</sup> Tytler presents, then, two parallel strands of preservation of historic song: one amongst the rural poor which maintains its ancient simplicity, and another amongst the metropolitan elite which had been corrupted by increasing refinement over time. By presenting the strand of preservation amongst the metropolitan elite as corrupted by refinement their singing of such songs was accommodated within the prevailing model of historical development: as their society had become more refined over time so their versions of the songs had become more refined, yet these songs could be identified as historic by their continued use in a simple, early form by the rural poor who maintained their simpler, earlier form of society.

Like Tytler, Ramsay of Ochtertyre and Cromeck contrast the songs sung by the metropolitan elite with those sung by the rural poor, presenting two distinct traditions of preservation. Ramsay of Ochtertyre, for example, writes:

Some of the more lively and droll songs, may perhaps appear to the present generation coarse and indelicate. Such, however, was the very style, in which a simple sequestered people, strangers to artificial rules of breeding, behaved in their hours of gaiety, and exuberant mirth. They are still faithful landscapes of the manners and oeconomics of our old fashioned sheep-farmers.<sup>54</sup>

Cromeck describes the songs of the peasantry as preserving “a fair portion of the spirit and rough nature of the olden times”, in contrast to the songs of his readers, which he describes as decked out in the “gilded and varnished trappings and tasselings of courtly refinement”.<sup>55</sup> In contrast to Tytler’s perception that the differences between the versions of songs sung by the rural poor and the versions sung by the metropolitan elite were due to the gradual corruption of the elite versions over time as their society became more refined, Ramsay of Ochtertyre and Cromeck present narratives in which the ancestors of the metropolitan elite had stopped singing historic songs, and their use by the metropolitan elite in their day was due to the intervention of a few key individuals. Ramsay of Ochtertyre suggests that the music of “an unlettered, uneducated shepherd” might have come to the attention of the people who were reading his article due to

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<sup>53</sup> Tytler 1783, *Poetical Remains*, 198-199.

<sup>54</sup> Runcole [John Ramsay of Ochtertyre] 1791, *On Scottish Songs*, 206.

<sup>55</sup> Cromeck 1810, *Remains*, iv-v.

"strangers of taste, who were occasionally in the country" taking copies of songs composed orally with the result that "their story, and at length, their very names, were totally forgotten, at the very time when their songs were universally esteemed" (206). One of these points of transmission may have been Allan Ramsay. Ramsay of Ochtertyre presents Allan Ramsay's "well-known collection of songs" as the basis for current knowledge of songs, by which he presumably means knowledge amongst the audience of his article, having already portrayed people in the country as continuing their preservation. Ramsay of Ochtertyre writes of Allan Ramsay "From what sources he procured them, whether from manuscripts or books not generally known, or from the memory of the aged, may perhaps be explained by some persons still alive" (207). Allan Ramsay is therefore portrayed by Ramsay of Ochtertyre as one of the points at which historical practice became available to the current practice of the metropolitan elite.

Allan Ramsay is also identified by Cromeck as the primary actor in the transfer of song from the rural poor to the metropolitan elite. Cromeck also attributes the singing of refined versions of historic song by the metropolitan elite to Ramsay's intervention: "His beautiful collections rekindled the smothered embers of Lyric Poetry – but he could not redeem the lost treasures of past ages; nor rake from the ashes of the fallen religion the sacred reliques of its songs. A few were redeemed – but they were trimmed anew, and laced with the golden thread of metaphysic foppery, over the coarse and homely hoddingray of rural industry".<sup>56</sup>

By positing a narrative of two parallel traditions of preservation, an authentic one amongst the rural poor, and a corrupt, refined one amongst the metropolitan audience, often linked by the intervention of one key individual, these accounts allow for the singing of historic song by the metropolitan audience to be accommodated within the model of historical progress which underpinned the consideration of that song as historic in the first place.

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<sup>56</sup> Cromeck 1810, *Remains*, iv.

## 4.5. Conclusion

Despite criticism of Ramsay's methods, and a dearth of historical evidence, Scottish music historians from the 1760s onwards continued to see the body of songs that Ramsay had published, and that their contemporaries were singing in their homes, as ancient music. They were able to do so because the features that Ramsay had drawn out as characteristic of ancient song, its simplicity, pastorality and naturalness, aligned with the features of the earliest forms of society in the prevailing model of historical development. The differing speeds of development of different societies that the model accounted for allowed collectors to find further examples of ancient music amongst the contemporary primitive societies of the Highlands and rural parts of the Lowlands and Borders.

In addition to underpinning the understanding of Scots songs and ballads as surviving ancient music, efforts to accommodate those songs and ballads to the model led writers to create music-historical narratives. These narratives went beyond the progress from simple to complex musical forms associated with the progress of society from simple, pastoral forms to more complex forms that one might expect, although we do see this in the work of writers such as Tytler. In order to accommodate songs and ballads which did not conform to the criteria of the early stages of the model, and in order to explain the singing of such songs by members of advanced commercial society, writers had to posit a narrative of corruption of ancient song over time. Then, in order to support their perception that song had been corrupted they had to posit a long period of uncorrupted preservation of song amongst another group to whom they could refer for the authentic versions. So, Scottish music historians formed a narrative of a society gradually developing towards refined commercial society and in consequence gradually corrupting and losing its ancient music. Meanwhile, part of that society remained in its primitive state into the eighteenth century and so maintained the primitive music largely in its pristine form. Beginning with the work of Ramsay, the gap between the two groups had been bridged by members of commercial society who had collected songs from the more primitive society. That this narrative itself conformed to the prevailing historical model, in its reliance on the idea that different societies developed at differing rates, thus demonstrates the key place of contemporary ideas about the universal historical

development of human societies in perceptions of Scottish music history. In the chapters which follow we will see that other aspects of Scottish music history were created by inflecting this universal master narrative in ways specific to the Scottish historical context.

## 5. Beyond Scots Songs and Ballads: The Use of Other Types of Sources to Write the History of Song

The previous chapter discussed the way in which the continued perception that Scots songs and ballads were ancient was underpinned by Enlightenment ideas about the universal progress of human societies. It was argued that the impact of the universal model of historical progress went beyond simply labelling Scots songs as ancient: efforts to accommodate songs to the universal model led to the creation of historical narrative. In the search for further ancient songs and ballads, collectors' activities reflect the application of ideas about the uneven development of different societies, permitted within the universal model, in the specifically Scottish context: Highland music could be perceived as ancient because Highland society was seen as a Scottish example of a society in an early stage of development. The current chapter further examines the interaction of ideas about universal human progress and the specifically Scottish context in the writing of Scottish music history, through the lens of the use of sources of information which were not the Scots songs and ballads that were being sung by the metropolitan elite or the rural poor. Some songs are considered, but these fall outwith the canon of song established by Ramsay and his followers.

In practice, most of the sources discussed in this chapter consist of some form of written record of the past. The focus on written material in the current chapter is not, however, intended to imply that the focus of the previous chapter was on oral sources: writers considered songs in manuscript, printed books, and versions collected orally, as reflections of a posited perfect original, and, in the majority of cases, the mode of transmission of historic song through time does not seem to have been of primary importance in determining preference for a given version. The previous chapter considered the idea that this body of song was ancient independently of the form in which the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century writers encountered it.

Scottish music historians were faced with a potential problem in that they had very few sources of information about the history of Scots songs and ballads beyond the

similarities between the perceived characteristics of songs and the perceived characteristics of early forms of society. Undaunted, they drew on any sources of information about music in the Scottish past, along with other information about the Scottish past which could be – often distantly – related to music, and wove these sources into their narratives of the history of Scots songs. The way in which these only distantly song-related sources were used to support the history of Scots songs painted a picture of musical life that differed between the Highlands and Lowlands. Joseph Ritson's 1794 *Scotish Songs* presented a different type of historical writing to that of many of his contemporaries, denying the antiquity of Scots songs and presenting a music history of the literate groups in Scotland's past drawn almost entirely from written sources. Despite his polemic call for a new type of music history Ritson's immediate impact on the field appears to have been slight. The idea that the music history of literate societies should be constructed from written sources does, however, appear again in later music-historical writings, in a new differentiation between the music history of different social classes. Ritson's ideas about the appropriate source materials for the history of Scots songs, and his source materials themselves were thus reabsorbed into the model of parallel traditions of preservation discussed in the previous chapter.

It will be argued that the impact of ideas about the universal progress of human history can be seen in the efforts to fit the evidence drawn from sources not immediately related to Scots songs into the narrative of the history of song discussed in the previous chapter, and in the desire for congruence between the type of source and the type of society it was used to illustrate. Ideas about the specifically Scottish context make their impact felt, not just in the differentiation between Highland and Lowland music histories, which was touched on in the previous chapter, but also in the use of written sources for the music history of a dateable literate past in the work of Ritson and the music history of past literate classes in the work of Motherwell and Dauney.

### **5.1. Manipulating the Past into the History of Song**

The previous chapter opened with an extended case study of the work of Tytler in his 'Dissertation on the Scottish Musick' of 1779. Although Tytler's primary guide in his

division of the history of song into stages was “the musick itself”, as he puts it, he does also refer to “a few authorities from our history”.<sup>1</sup> The secondary place of the “few authorities from our history” in Tytler’s music history is typical of music-historical writing of the time; this will be illustrated in the section which follows.

For many writers on Scottish music history in the late eighteenth century the lack of references to Scots songs in historic documents presented a potential barrier to their use in the writing of the history of Scots songs: as Ramsay of Ochtertyre wrote in 1791:

I shall first state some circumstances that seem to impeach the high antiquity of these admired lays. In a very rare and curious book, intitled Scotland’s complaint, printed at St. Andrews soon after the fatal battle of Pinkey, the author takes occasion to give a list of the poems, the tales, and the dances, that were then in most repute. The poems are 35 in number, which, from their titles, may have been partly songs. The man of system will, however, be mortified to find, that that *huntis* of Cheviot and the battle of Harlow are the only ones familiar to modern ears.... It may be said, this is only a specimen; but surely the author’s learning and good sense would have led him to prefer excellence to mediocrity; nor was he likely to omit the Flowers of the Forest, or a number of other songs, which do honour to the taste and feelings of his countrymen. At the same time, this objections strikes with equal force at the existence of all of our ancient poetry, in direct opposition to the most convincing evidence.

He goes on to note the similar lack of songs “reckoned ancient” in the Bannatyne and Maitland manuscripts.<sup>2</sup>

Many of the sources used which were not Scots songs or ballads similarly did not have explicit links to those songs and ballads. The evidence used to support that case that James I had composed Scots songs provides a typical example. As we saw in the chapter 2, attributing some Scots songs to David Rizzio had been widespread in the early eighteenth century. None of the writers who repeated this attribution cited any supporting sources. Lord Kames, writing in 1774, may sum up the prevailing opinion that “These are commonly thought to be the composition of David Rizzio, because he was an

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<sup>1</sup> Tytler 1779, *Dissertation*, 624.

<sup>2</sup> Runcole [John Ramsay of Ochtertyre] 1791, *On Scottish Songs*, 202.

Italian and a musician". Lord Kames' revolutionary ascription of songs' composition to James I, however, turned entirely on what he perceived to be a supporting source. Kames described the songs "we have in Scotland" in his own time as "tender and pathetic, expressive of love in its varieties of hope, fear, success, despondence, and despair". Kames notes that due to the "wild and irregular" nature of the music "None but men of genius, who study nature, and break loose from the thraldom of custom esteem that music". Amongst these "men of genius", however, could be found the composer Geminiani and one Alessandro Tassoni. Kames translates a passage from Tassoni's *Pensieri Diversi* as follows: "We may reckon among the composers of the modern, James King of Scotland, who not only composed sacred songs, but was himself the inventor of a new style of music, plaintive and pathetic, different from all others". He concludes: "The king mentioned must be James I. of Scotland, the only one of our kings who seems to have had any remarkable taste in the fine arts; and the music can be no other than the songs mentioned above".<sup>3</sup>

This is the full extent of Kames' comments on Scottish music history, yet this short passage demonstrates a number of features typical of the use of non-song sources in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: firstly, Tassoni's writing is used to illuminate the history of songs which were being sung in the homes of the elite at the time at which Kames was writing. That Kames refers to the songs which had been published in *The Tea-Table Miscellany* and its followers can be seen from his use of the present tense and the reference to David Rizzio. Secondly, Kames links a source which makes no explicit references to Scots song to that body of song. Kames appears to base the link he draws between such songs and Tassoni's description of the type of music written by James, king of Scotland on the parallels between the features of eighteenth-century songs that Kames describes and the features of the type of music that Tassoni ascribes to James. Thirdly, Kames brings in a further idea which also has no explicit link to the songs that were being sung in his time in order to further illuminate their historical nature: in this case the idea that James I was the only king known to be exceptional in

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<sup>3</sup> Home 1774, *Sketches*, 166-167.

music, and in this case not itself sourced. Finally, Kames uses sources from a wide time period, in this case two hundred years separate James I and Tassoni.<sup>4</sup>

Kames' argument began a trend for ascribing Scots songs to James I. Two years later Hawkins began his discussion of song by refuting the idea that David Rizzio had composed songs. He then drew together a diverse range of sources to illustrate the musical abilities of James I: firstly, he used the fifteenth-century writer Bale, the early seventeenth-century writer Dempster, and the mid-eighteenth-century writer bishop Tanner for their references to musical treatises written by James I. Secondly, he used Buchanan's *Rerum Scoticarum historia* of 1582 to support the idea that James I played many instruments. John Mair and Bishop Nicholson's writings are used to provide support for James's abilities as a poet, and finally, Hawkins used Tassoni's testimony as evidence that James wrote music. These sources were all used together as evidence that James I wrote the songs which had previously been ascribed to David Rizzio.<sup>5</sup> Like Kames, Hawkins uses sources which do not have an explicit link to Scots songs to illuminate the history Scots songs, and like Kames, Hawkins was happy to draw together sources from a wide time period.

At the end of the decade William Tytler again discussed James I's role in the composition of song. Tytler begins his discussion of the musical abilities of James I by quoting Fordun's *Scotichronicon*. Tytler notes that the passage quoted shows that James I was celebrated "not only as an excellent performer, but a great theorist in musick, and a composer of airs to his own verses". Tytler then cites John Major: "who celebrates James I. as a poet, composer, and admirable performer of musick; affirms, that, in his (Major's) time, the verses and songs of that Prince, (*Cantilenae*) were reckoned among the first of the Scots melodies". These two sources were produced in the 1440s and 1521 respectively, and so Bower at least could represent James I's musical reputation reasonably soon after his death. Having established James I's claim to be a composer of song using these two sources Tytler goes on to argue that:

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<sup>4</sup> James I lived from 1394 to 1437, Tassoni was writing in the 1620s.

<sup>5</sup> Hawkins 1776, *General History* Vol. 4, 4-5.

Amongst the number of our old Scots melodies, it is, I think, scarce to be doubted, that many of King James's compositions which were esteemed amongst the *first of the age*, are still remaining; but, as no tradition down to our time, has ascertained them, they, in all probability, pass undistinguished, under other names, and are adapted to more modern times".<sup>6</sup>

Tytler goes on to defend the author of the *Scotichronicon* and Mair from the charge that "It may be suspected from the above high strained authorities, that his countrymen rather allowed themselves to be carried too far in setting out the qualifications of their King" by referring to the passage from Tassoni quoted previously by Kames and Hawkins.

Having accounted for the influence of the music of James I on Italian music, Tytler writes, "To return to the Scots songs. It is not to be doubted, that, under such a genius for musick and poetry as King James I. the national musick must have greatly improved". He follows this statement by noting the effect of James I's education in England and France: "To his excellent talents, cultivated by education in England and France....his country, at his return to it, in the year 1424, owes its cultivation and emergence from a state of rudeness". He credits James I with solving the "disorders" left by the previous government and introducing "politeness of manners, together with a taste for the liberal arts and sciences". Turning to music, Tytler argues that "One great step to the improvement of the science of musick, was the introduction by that Prince, (according to our historians), of organs into the cathedrals and abbeys [sic] of Scotland; and, of course, the establishment of a choral service of church musick". Finally, he concludes that:

As James is said to have been a fine performer on the lute and harp, on which he accompanied his own songs, the playing on these instruments must, by the Prince's example, have become fashionable, and, of course, a more refined and regular modulation of composition in the Scots songs introduced. The simple scale of the pipe, by the introducing of the stringed instrument, became, in consequence, much enlarged, not only by a greater extent of notes, but by the division of them into semitones.<sup>7</sup>

Like his discussion of James I's musical abilities, in the passage outlined above Tytler builds his case for James I leading an improvement in Scots song by combining a diverse

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<sup>6</sup> Tytler 1779, *Dissertation*, 627.

<sup>7</sup> Tytler 1779, *Dissertation*, 631-632.

range of source materials: sources that show James I's level of education; sources that show his governing policies; sources which show his attitude towards sacred music; and sources which show James I's instrumental abilities. Tytler uses all of these sources to suggest that James I not only wrote Scots songs but was instrumental in a more widespread improvement in song writing resulting in the Scots songs which were still being sung in Tytler's time.

Tytler, like Kames and Hawkins, makes a leap in applying information about James I from sources which were created at dateable periods in the past, although not always the period for which he uses them as evidence, and which were not explicitly related to Scots songs, to the history of the Scots songs that were being sung in the eighteenth century. These writers are typical of many in taking a piecemeal approach to the use of written sources, and using them to support a history of Scots song that was largely constructed from the songs themselves and the type of conjecture influenced by ideas about progress and stadal theory that was discussed in the previous section.

## **5.2. Non-Song Sources and the Different Histories of Lowland/Border and Highland Music**

In his discussion of the musical ability of James I, discussed above, Tytler makes reference to Major's description of the lute and harp playing of the king. Tytler uses the musical capabilities of the lute and harp to suggest that songs from that time must have had the characteristics of music possible to play on those instruments. Major's reference to James I's lute and harp playing, then, is used by Tytler to calibrate his pre-existing ideas about musical progress: at some point the fourth and the seventh must have been introduced into music, since they exist in his day, Major's reference to lute and harp playing allows this point to be, in Tytler's opinion, precisely pinned to the fifteenth century.

Like Tytler, Thomson uses non-song sources to calibrate his scale of musical change in Scots songs. He concludes that the songs described as "old" by Ramsay must have been from a remote era "anterior to the common use, among the people, of those instruments

which are capable of producing the diatonic scale". He draws together primary evidence of the historic use of instruments which produce the diatonic scale. Thomson uses references to the Lowland bagpipe in *Peblis to the Play*, a poem attributed to James I, and in a poem of Sir David Lindsay "written about 1550", and a reference to the use of viols and rebeccs in Brantôme's account of the entry of Queen Mary into Scotland to suggest that these instruments were well known at the time the sources were created and "at a much earlier date; for an instrument which was popular at that time, may be presumed to have been known for a long time before". From this he suggests that songs which did not use the diatonic scale must have been composed prior to this period.<sup>8</sup> References to instruments in sources which were not clearly related to song, then, could allow this calibration of the scale of musical development in song writing derived from conjectural sources.

Tytler and Thomson, like many other writers, were primarily interested in the history of Lowland or Border song. An examination of the use of other types of source to support the history of Highland song reveals a difference in the approach to the different regions. Both groups share a somewhat piecemeal approach to the use of primary non-song sources from the past, using the work of past historians or documents from the past to support a music history drawn primarily from well-known Scots songs and the ideas about historic development discussed above. In contrast to the work of Tytler and Thomson, in which non-song sources were used to calibrate the rate of musical change in song over time, writers on Highland music history use non-song sources to present a long period of unchanging musical practice.

In his 1784 essay 'Of the Influence of Poetry and Music upon the Highlanders' Ramsay of Ochtertyre sees Highlanders in the late eighteenth century as retaining "remnant[s] of primeval manners".<sup>9</sup> He then draws together a number of disparate pieces of evidence for harp playing in the Highlands: the poems of the third-century bard Ossian; the last harper to the Laird of McLeod in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries,

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<sup>8</sup> Thomson 1822, *Select Melodies of Scotland*, 12.

<sup>9</sup> [John Ramsay of Ochtertyre] 1784, *Influence of Poetry and Music*, 8.

Rhoderick Morison or Dall; the testimony of the twelfth-century writer Giraldus Cambrensis regarding music in Scotland; and the fifteenth and sixteenth century historian John Major's opinion that James I played the harp better than the Highlanders or Irish. Out of four pieces of evidence spanning fifteen centuries, then, Ramsay of Ochtertyre creates a picture of a long period of stable practice. This same picture is reflected Ramsay of Ochtertyre's later statement that "it is no ways wonderful, that it [ancient music] should be found, last of all, among the Highlanders, whose manners have been stationary, ever since the northern nations [the Vikings] quitted their coasts".<sup>10</sup>

William Skene in 1837 similarly depicts the Highlanders as maintaining ancient practices: he writes that "the Highlanders have at all times possessed a peculiarly strong inclination for melody". Of the harp he writes that "although it has been for many generations unknown, there is little doubt that it was at one time in very general use throughout the Highlands". He goes on to draw together a variety of sources to show the longevity of this use: a quote from 'certain curious matters touching Scotland in 1797', some sixteenth-century entries in the Lord High Treasurers Accounts recording payments to harpers associated with Highland regions, a roll of soldiers shipped from Lochkerran in 1627 which included a harper, an extant seventeenth-century harp; and harps depicted on "large pillars of stone, carved with ancient sculptures", one of the ninth century and the other "of still greater antiquity".<sup>11</sup> Again, a few pieces of evidence are used to support a picture of continuous practice over nine centuries.

It was argued in the previous chapter that eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century music historians felt able to consider Scots songs ancient because they were perceived to have features which matched the features of early states of society in musical terms. It was noted that Highland society was widely seen as a society in a retarded state of development, and argued that the similar use of Lowland and Border song from the rural poor suggested that they were similarly seen to be in a retarded state of development. The differential use of non-song sources between Lowland/Border music histories and

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<sup>10</sup> [John Ramsay of Ochtertyre] 1784, *Influence of Poetry and Music* 11-12, 14.

<sup>11</sup> Skene 1837, *Highlanders of Scotland*, 215, 216-217.

Highland music histories suggests that this picture should be more nuanced. The difference suggests a perception that Lowland and Border societies had advanced more towards commercial society than Highland society had, whilst still remaining in an overall retarded state. This difference between perceptions of Lowland/Border and Highland music history shows that it was not simply the ideas about the nature of all early societies that shaped the writing of Scottish music history: such ideas about the universal past were inflected by ideas specific to the Scottish context.

### **5.3.Ritson and the Music History of Literate Society**

While differences exist between the use of non-song primary sources from the past by writers on Lowland and Border music history, such as Tytler and Thomson, and writers on Highland music history, such as Ramsay of Ochtertyre and Skene, they share the more widespread perception that the primary materials on which Scottish music history should be constructed were ancient Scots songs and ballads themselves. Other sources which might pertain to the music of the past were used in a very much piecemeal supporting role.

In 1794 the English antiquary Joseph Ritson published his *Scotish Songs* with the extensive introduction essay ‘A Historical Essay on Scottish Song’ in which he took a very different approach. Ritson was deeply sceptical of the claims that the Scots songs and ballads that were being sung by his contemporaries were ancient:

There are in Scotland many ballads, or legendary and romantic songs, composed in a singular style, and preserved by tradition among the country people.... None of these bear satisfactory marks of the antiquity they pretend to while the expressions or allusions occurring in some, would seem to fix their origins to a very modern date. But, in fact, with respect to vulgar poetry, preserved by tradition, it is almost impossible to discriminate the ancient from the modern, the true from the false.... So that a performance of genius and merit, as the purest stream becomes polluted by the foulness of its channel, may in time be degraded to the vilest jargon. Tradition, in short, is a species of alchemy which converts gold to lead.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ritson 1794, *Scotish Song*, lxxx-lxxxi. Subsequent references will be found in parentheses in the main text.

Despite this, Ritson's collection consists primarily of songs already published elsewhere: the 1750 edition of *The Tea-Table Miscellany*, Herd's *Ancient and Modern Scotish Songs*, *Heroic Ballads etc.*, and the *Scots Musical Museum* are listed among the sources. Ritson lists *Orpheus Caledonius*, *Musick For Allan Ramsay's Collection of Scots Songs*, and the *Caledonian Pocket Companion* amongst the main sources of the melodies (ii-iv). Like the other writers considered in this study Ritson saw himself as writing the history of this type of song, but unlike those writers, he did not consider the Scots songs and ballads themselves the best source of information about the music of the past.

His suspicion of the songs and ballads "preserved among the country people" rests primarily on the possibility that oral tradition could be referred to in order to pass off eighteenth-century compositions as ancient material. Such criticisms had been levelled at the works of Ossian from the 1760s, and Ritson adds to these with his comments that the works "cannot well be of the antiquity they pretend to" (xxi-xxiii). Ten years prior to the publication of *Scotish Songs* Ritson had been responsible for exposing Pinkerton's forgery of ancient songs in *Scottish Tragic Ballads* and *Select Scotish Ballads* in a letter published in *The Gentleman's Magazine: and historical chronicle*.<sup>13</sup> Following his discussion of the ballad 'Hardyknute' in *Scotish Songs* Ritson remarks "Why the Scottish literati should be more particularly addicted to literary imposition than those of any other country, might be a curious subject of investigation for their new Royal society" (lxii-lxii). The depth and strong expression of his scepticism of oral tradition is unmatched in writings on Scottish music history.

Instead, Ritson presents a history of song drawn primarily from dateable, written primary sources, beginning with a chronological discussion of surviving song texts. The "remains" and "vestiges" that he uses as his source materials are almost entirely drawn from written sources: he begins with ten lines from "the riming chronicle of Andrew Winton, prior of Lochleven, written, as is generally supposed, about the year 1420", noting in a footnote

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<sup>13</sup> See ANTI-SCOT 1784, *Letter to Mr. Pinkerton*.

his source in “MSS Reg 17 DXX”.<sup>14</sup> Ritson’s next example is from “MSS Har. 225 7333” and consists of four lines regarding the siege of Berwick in 1296.<sup>15</sup> He follows these with a comment about the loss of material from this period, deduced from lines in some manuscript copies of the *Scotichronicon* (xxiv-xxvi). Ritson continues this dense focus on written sources throughout his essay.

The section on texts is followed by a discussion of song melodies. Ritson’s preference for written sources is again in evidence: he spends some pages unpicking Tytler’s chronology of melodies and the ascription of songs to James I, writing of Tytler’s work that “as he has been guided rather by fancy and hypothesis than by argument or evidence, it is almost unnecessary to say that he has not succeeded” (lxxxii). Ritson does use some conjecture himself in this section, conjecturing that the words and melody of the ‘The bonny earl of Murray’ “may be reasonably supposed contemporary with the date of his murder” (ciii). The same thinking may underlie his previous suggestions that ‘Flowden-hill’, the ‘Souters of Selkirk’, the ‘Gaberlunzie man’, ‘The beggars meal pokes’ and ‘Where Helen lies’ could appear immediately after sources from the reign of James I in his chronological narrative, although he does not clearly state this (xcvii-xcviii). Ritson does also use written sources: the ‘Aberdeen collection, printed in 1666’ is cited as a source, and suggested to contain earlier material based on the appearance of ‘O lusty May with Flora queen’, “which is known to have been popular in 1549” (ciii-civ).<sup>16</sup> Ritson’s section on song melodies demonstrates the same suspicion of oral sources as his section on song texts, even if he

<sup>14</sup> The manuscript to which Ritson refers is British Library MS Royal 17 D XX: ‘Orygynale Cronykil of Scotland’ by Andrew (Andrew) of Wyntoun. The lines that Ritson sees as the earliest song have also been perceived to hold a similar position in the history of Scottish poetry, a role discussed in detail in Jones 2013, *Wyntoun’s Song on the Death of Alexander III*. Jones also provides a useful summary of the manuscripts in which the lines are found and the differences between them.

<sup>15</sup> This may refer to manuscript British Library Harley MS 7333: ‘The Canterbury Tales (imperfect), and other works, including the Prose Brut Chronicle of England ('peculiar version' to 1419) (ff. 1-24v), extracts from Gower's Confessio Amantis, and Lydgate's Life of Edmund and Fremund (ff. 136-146v)’. This has not, however, been verified. Ritson is cited as the source of numerous later references to this purported song/poem, for example, Chalmers 1806, *Poetical Works of Sir David Lynsay*, 129; Dauney 1838, *Ancient Scottish Melodies*, 42-43; Irving 1861, *History of Scotish Poetry*, 79.

<sup>16</sup> Ritson refers to *Songs and fancies: to thre, foure, or five partes, both apt for voices and viols : with a briefe introduction of musick, as is taught in the musick-schule of Aberdene by T. D. Mr. of Musick* (Aberdeen: John Forbes). ‘O Lusty May’ appears from the first edition of 1662 in which it is the second song. Subsequent editions appeared in 1666 and 1682. Despite changes in the later editions (see Terry 1936, *Songs and Fancies*, 413-418) ‘O Lusty May’ was retained.

does not practice what he preaches with such rigour. Such flexibility in his implementation may be explained by his comment that “No direct evidence, it is believed, can be produced of the existence of any Scottish tune, now known, prior to the year 1660, exclusive of such as are already mentioned” (cv).

Ritson’s final section covers the history of instruments. In this section Ritson again demonstrates his commitment to written forms of evidence, discussing sources such as the fifteenth-century poem ‘The Houlate’ which refers to a number of musical instruments. The idea that the instruments of the past could convey information about songs and ballads in the past had appeared in a number of publications prior to Ritson’s. Franklin for example attributes the melodic structure of ancient song to the characteristics of the harps played by ancient minstrels.<sup>17</sup> Tytler included the criterion “such as could be played on a simple instrument of limited compass, such perhaps, as the shepherd’s pipe” as defining the most ancient melodies. Like Franklin, Tytler too saw minstrels’ harps as providing information about the characteristics of melodies in the period between the reigns of James I and James V.<sup>18</sup> Franklin’s and Tytler’s uses of musical instruments provide, like their use of other non-song sources, piecemeal support to their history of song. Again, Ritson’s discussion of instruments differs, like his discussion of the history of song texts and melodies, in providing a systematic account based primarily on written sources.

In addition to his scepticism of oral sources, Ritson’s almost exclusive use of written evidence may be related to the nature of the society whose music he seeks to elucidate. Ritson begins his essay with a long discussion of the origins of different racial and linguistic groups in Scotland from the earliest times up to the twelfth century. He characterises the ancient Caledonians, the Picts and the Irish settlers of the sixth century as Celts. Ritson argued that by the beginning of the eleventh century the speech and manners of Scotland, with the exception of the Norse “northernmost parts” and Anglo-Saxon Lothian and Merse, were “universally Celtic, or, in a word, nearly those of the

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<sup>17</sup> Franklin 1765, *To Lord Kames*.

<sup>18</sup> Tytler 1779, *Dissertation*, 625, 632.

Highlanders, as they are called, at this day" (xi-xvi). Ritson characterises these Celts as Gaelic speakers, arguing that Pictish was superseded because Gaelic was a written language but Pictish was not (xvi fn.). Despite this earlier literacy, Ritson argues that by the accession of Malcolm Canmore in 1056 the Scots were largely illiterate: "The Scots, at this period, were so excessively illiterate, that even their sovereign himself, as we learn from one who knew him, was unable to read" (xviii fn.). Ritson argued that from the ascension of Malcolm Canmore Gaelic declined in importance, since as a result of his exile at the English court Malcolm Canmore preferred the English language and manners "for cultivated [Gaelic] does not appear and is not supposed to have been at any period whatever".<sup>19</sup> In contrast to the illiterate scots Ritson characterises the incoming Saxons as a literate people:

The Saxons, on the contrary, were a very literary people, and cultivated their native tongue with ... success. The church men and other refugees would of course carry a number of books into Scotland; and, being familiar with the modes of education, could teach the native Saxon with much greater facility and expedition than they could possibly acquire the Gaelic (xviii fn.).

By the time of Alexander III in the thirteenth century Ritson argued that English was spoken everywhere "the Gaelic....being confined to the remote and mountainous parts, of which the inhabitants were less civilised or commercial" (xx). Having concluded his exposition of linguistic and racial groups Ritson states that:

An investigation of the poetry and song of the ancient inhabitants of this country, whether Picts or Scots, previous to the introduction and establishment of the English language, would no doubt be curious and interesting; but, unfortunately, no remains or vestiges are to be met with. Many pieces of Erse, or Gaelic poetry have, it is true, been lately collected and published, which are said to have great merit, but cannot well be of the antiquity they pretend to; every one at least is, or ought to be, now satisfied that the epic poems of Ossian, who is supposed to have existed in the fifth century, as professedly translated by Mr. Macpherson, are chiefly, if not wholly [*sic*], of his own invention. The song therefor which is meant to be the subject of this essay is that of the natives of Scotland speaking and writing the English language (xxi-xxiii).

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<sup>19</sup> Ritson 1794, *Scotish Song*, xvii. Ritson gives further reasons for the rise in English and decline in Gaelic in a footnote.

Ritson uses primarily written sources, then, within a carefully defined framework of a literate and literary society.

Ritson, as we have seen, was an Ossian sceptic, and positioned his focus on written sources in direct opposition to the works of James Macpherson. Macpherson's Ossianic publications and their reception may, however, help to understand Ritson's work.

In his 1999 book, *The Making of Percy's Reliques*, Nick Groom presents a detailed study of the use of different types of source materials in Macpherson's works of Ossian and Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*. Shortly before the boom in writing about Scottish music history began in the late 1760s James Macpherson began publishing the works of Ossian. Ossian was a third-century Irish bard. Macpherson claimed to have collected the poetry from the oral recitation of eighteenth-century Highlanders and translated it from the Gaelic. The figure of the bard reciting poetry to the music of his harp appears throughout the works. Macpherson's work quickly generated much controversy regarding its authenticity. Suspicion that the works of Ossian were Macpherson's own work rested on two objections: firstly, some commentators thought that it was not possible that a primitive peoples should produce epic poetry; and secondly, the possibility of oral tradition preserving material over fifteen centuries was disputed.<sup>20</sup> In reaction to the publication of the works of Ossian, Thomas Percy, a clergyman based in Easton Maudit in Northamptonshire published *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* in 1765. In contrast to Macpherson's work, Percy emphasised the written nature of his source materials.

Groom argues that because Macpherson had argued in his 1760 *Fragments of Ancient Poetry Collected in the Highlands of Scotland* that Celtic society was entirely illiterate, subscribing to the view that early language was oral held by a number of eighteenth-century thinkers such as Johnson and Hume, the oral nature of the poems themselves provided proof of their antiquity. This was supported by the focus on oral performance in

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<sup>20</sup> David Hume was amongst those who held these reservations, see Hudson 1996, *Oral Tradition*, particularly p.170.

the poems themselves.<sup>21</sup> The publication of *Fingal* in 1762 further reinforced this sense of orality: episodes which had appeared in the *Fragments* appeared in a different form in *Fingal* with annotations pointing to the differences, so, Groom argues, demonstrating the inherent orality of the sources (78-79).

The Irish backlash against Macpherson's Scottish claims to the poems of Ossian drew on documentary evidence. Macpherson's assertion of the orality of Celtic society meant, however, that claims based on manuscript evidence seemed to have less authority than those based in oral tradition (75). Groom attributes the failure of *Temora* and the ultimate discreditation of the whole Ossian project to Macpherson's attempts to use manuscript evidence to explain and define the oral tradition. Macpherson even went as far as to publish *A Specimen of the original of Temora Book Seventh* in 1763. Groom argues that these resorts to manuscripts had a "lethal" effect on the idea of oral culture which had underpinned Macpherson's legitimisation of oral evidence. Demands were made to see the manuscripts on which the Ossian publications were based, and since Macpherson could not supply these his works were dismissed as forgeries (90-92). Groom argues that the failure of *Temora* shows that by the mid-1760s "the source had become the deciding factor in the antiquarian canonization of literature" (92).

In contrast to Macpherson, Percy focussed on the literary origins of his source materials. Percy saw the origins of ancient English minstrelsy in the work of the scalds, the Gothic inventors of writing and poetry. English minstrels were the descendants of the literate scalds, although they preserved material orally. This oral performance was "taken down from the mouths" of minstrels by the publishers of broadsides and chapbooks. Groom notes that this interaction of orality and literacy permitted editorial revisions, but at the same time "the minstrel corpus was translated from the vocal to the literate and crystallized cultural identity in physical texts" (98-100). The folio manuscript that prompted Percy to begin work on the *Reliques* held the proof of its antiquarian status in its physical literate form (102). The verification of antiquarian sources in both

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<sup>21</sup> Groom 1999, *Making of Percy's Reliques*, 75–76. Subsequent references to this book will appear in parentheses in the main text.

Macpherson's and Percy's cases relied on congruence between the oral or literate nature of the source and the oral or literate nature of the societies which were perceived to have produced them.

Ritson's extensive study of the linguistic and racial origins of Scotland was produced partly in response to John Pinkerton's controversial theories of the Gothic origins of the modern Scots.<sup>22</sup> Yet the effect of publishing his theories as an introduction to his discussion of the history of song is to draw attention to the congruence between the orality or otherwise of past societies and the orality or literacy of the source materials for the history of their song which Groom has highlighted in the Macpherson/Percy debate. The examination of the song of a literate society must, for Ritson rely on literary sources.

In his scepticism of the antiquity claimed for the songs "preserved amongst the country people", Ritson's ideas ran counter to the tide of opinion which was able to see such songs as ancient because their perceived characteristic features conformed to ideas about the nature of early societies. Yet the way that Ritson insists that the type of source he uses should match the nature of the society whose music he seeks to illuminate suggests that he was not immune to the influence of the idea that all early societies exhibited similar traits: specifically, that orality gradually developed into literacy over time. Ritson's use of written sources exhibits, like the work of the writers discussed in the previous section, the interaction of ideas about the universal nature of early societies with ideas specific to the Scottish past: Ritson's history begins in the thirteenth century because he not only has a written source, but he can explain the existence of such a written source by the transition from an oral to a literate society in the preceding period effected by specifically Scottish historical events.

#### **5.4. The Use of Written Sources for the Music History of Literate Groups After Ritson**

Ritson's work did not effect the change in the methodology of Scottish music history that he might have hoped. Many writers continued to base their narratives primarily on the

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<sup>22</sup> For a discussion of Pinkerton's theories see Kidd 1993, *Subverting Scotland's Past*, 251-253.

Scots songs and ballads that their contemporaries were singing, and continued their piecemeal application of other types of source with no direct link to the history of song to support the history of Scots songs. In George Thomson's 1822 essay, for example, he uses an Act of Parliament of 6<sup>th</sup> May 1471 permitting minstrels to wear the same quality of clothing as knights and heralds, combined with the writings of Lindsay on James III's attitude towards choristers to portray a thriving minstrel class, to whom he attributes the composition of some Scots songs: "we are also disposed to think, that many of the more artificial and less ancient melodies may have been produced by the minstrels or harpers". He then uses Bellenden's 1536 *The History and Chronicles of Scotland* which report purported Acts of monarchs of Scotland to portray a period of decline in minstrelsy in consequence of their having become "so numerous, degenerate and intolerable".<sup>23</sup> Such an approach shows more parallels with the earlier writings of Tytler and Ramsay of Ochtertyre, for example, than with Ritson's.<sup>24</sup>

Thomson did use some of the sources which Ritson had introduced into the writing of Scottish music history: he uses 'Peblis to the Play', David Lyndsay's *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis*, and Brantôme's account of the entry of Mary Queen of Scots into Edinburgh as sources of information about the instruments used in the past, for example.<sup>25</sup> His use of such sources, however, continues to be within the framework of support for the history of Scots songs that had been characteristic of earlier writers. John Leyden presents another example in which sources first used by Ritson are used, but outwith Ritson's carefully defined literate society: he mentions, for example, the appearance of the bagpipe in 'Peblis to the Play' in his discussion of the history of the "drone bag pipe" mentioned in *The Complaynt*, and he uses Brantôme's account of the entry of Mary Queen of Scots into Edinburgh to show that the "fiddill" was popular in

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<sup>23</sup> Thomson 1822, *Select Melodies of Scotland*, 17.

<sup>24</sup> Tytler, for example, had earlier used the writings of the history John Mair to create a picture of wandering minstrels traveling from house to house performing songs to the accompaniment of the harp. From this he concluded that many Scots songs "such as Busk ye, busk ye – Waly, waly, - Willie's fair...." could be attributed to such minstrels (Tytler 1779, Dissertation, 633). Ramsay of Ochtertyre cited an Act of Parliament to characterise a period of decline in minstrelsy following the Union of the Crowns, in order to account for the preservation of Scots song by the peasantry (Runcole [John Ramsay of Ochtertyre] 1791, *On Scottish Songs*, 205).

<sup>25</sup> Thomson 1822, *Select Melodies of Scotland*, 12.

Edinburgh at the time when *The Complaynt* was written.<sup>26</sup> Yet Leyden presents the information gleaned from written sources alongside information derived from the current practice of shepherd boys, as exemplified in the passage which begins with his discussion of the “pipe maid of ane bleddir and of ane reid”: he opens with “The simplicity of its [the pipe’s] structure renders it the favourite of shepherd boys”; before turning to the next instrument, the “trump” which he presents as a past favourite instrument on St. Kilda, and of sixteenth-century witches. He cites Martin Martin’s 1698 *The Late Voyage to St. Kilda* as one of his sources, and it seems likely that his information on the witches was drawn from the 1591 publication, *Newes from Scotland*.<sup>27</sup>

In contrast to the piecemeal approaches outlined above, a few writers reproduce Ritson’s body of written sources and/or his systematic approach more faithfully. Alexander Campbell’s 1816 publication presents a systematic, chronological, account of the sources for the history of music in Scotland between the twelfth and eighteenth centuries, like Ritson’s, although he adds the Exchequer Rolls and accounts of the royal household to the body of source materials available. Campbell also presents his discussion of instruments in a separate section of his preface in a similar mode to Ritson.<sup>28</sup>

Dauney, like Ritson, presents a chronological list of the written sources which were available: the song on the death of Alexander III from Andrew of Wyntoun’s Chronicle; the lines on the siege of Berwick from one of the Harleian manuscripts; the song on Bannockburn given by Fabyan; and the song on the marriage of David I also given by Fabyan. Dauney misses a few of the sources presented by Ritson in this passage, but the resemblance remains striking.<sup>29</sup> In the other sections of his ‘Dissertation’ Dauney moves beyond the sources used by Ritson, using, like Campbell, a great deal of information drawn from the Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer in his section on instruments, for

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<sup>26</sup> Leyden 1801, *Complaynt*, 142, 168-169. Cf. Ritson 1794, *Scotish Song*, cxiii, cxviii.

<sup>27</sup> Leyden 1801, *Complaynt*, 152-153. Leyden does not reference his source for the assertion that the “trump” was a favourite instrument of sixteenth-century witches, but Dauney does - see Dauney 1838, *Ancient Scottish Melodies*, 131-132 fn.

<sup>28</sup> Campbell 1816, *Albyn's Anthology*, iii-v, vii-ix.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Ritson 1794, *Scotish Song*, xxiv-xxviii; Dauney 1838, *Ancient Scottish Melodies*, 40-44. The sources used by Ritson that Dauney misses from his chronological list are the reference to songs about William Wallace from the *Scotichronicon* and a reference to a song found in Barbour’s *Bruce*.

example. Yet the overall structure of Dauney's 'Dissertation' continues to echo Ritson's earlier writing: Ritson had covered song texts, song melodies and instruments as separate enquiries; Dauney covers lyric poetry, instruments and the style and character of music and song in similarly separate sections. William Motherwell presents a further example of extensive use of Ritson's body of sources.<sup>30</sup>

We saw earlier in this chapter, that, in contrast to the majority of writers on Scottish music history, Ritson had denied the antiquity of songs "preserved amongst the country people". Instead, he had given the impression in his preface that the Scots songs that his contemporaries in the metropolitan elite were singing were historic in the sense of being the latest manifestations of a type of song that was attested to in written sources from the time that Scotland had become a literate nation. Although they do draw on Ritson's sources in the ways outlined above, Dauney and Motherwell differ from Ritson in that they continue to see the Scots songs and ballads that their contemporaries were singing as ancient. The way that Motherwell and Dauney incorporate Ritson's sources into their music histories does, however, maintain Ritson's idea that written sources illuminated the practice of literate groups in the past. In contrast to Ritson, who presents an early oral society replaced in time by a literate one, Dauney and Motherwell present concurrent oral and literate societies. They use written sources for the literate groups of the past, and oral sources for the oral groups.

Motherwell, for example, justifies the inclusion of both written and oral sources in his method in the following way:

In the pages of our early chronicles, incidental allusions to these songs sometimes occur, but these notices are ever meagre and unsatisfactory, for it would seem, that the "learned clerks," who compiled our authentick annals, had little sympathy with the tastes of the "lewd vulgare," and seldom deigned to pretermit the labours of their own cunning pen, for the sake of recording a popular rhyme.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> See, for examples, Motherwell 1827, *Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern*, xlvi.

<sup>31</sup> Motherwell 1827, *Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern*, xlvi.

The sources that Motherwell shares with Ritson, then, are presented as the partial record of an oral tradition incidentally produced by a literate higher class. This permits him to use the sources used by Ritson alongside the material he had collected from oral tradition. Dauney, like Motherwell, presents Ritson's body of written sources as the products of a literate class recording a literate musical tradition, culminating in the Skene manuscript. Alongside this he presents the current practice of the country people as a source of information about the pastoral music of the past, based on the assumption that "pastoral life is necessarily much the same in all ages and in all countries".<sup>32</sup>

The work of Motherwell and Dauney in this regard melds ideas about the oral preservation of Scots songs and ballads, with Ritson's ideas about the place of written sources in Scottish music history. Like Tytler, Ramsay of Ochtertyre and Cromeck, they present two parallel strands of Scottish music history: on the one hand, the music of the rural poor which they perceived to have remained unchanged over time; and on the other, the music of the ancestors of their contemporary metropolitan elite. Where Tytler, Ramsay of Ochtertyre and Cromeck had only theorised the gradual corruption of song over the course of the development of the second group towards the pinnacle of eighteenth-century commercial society, Motherwell and Dauney take Ritson's body of sources, and use it to chart the music history of their ancestors. In so doing, they maintain the use of written sources for literate groups, that Ritson had insisted on, and remain within the model which saw orality as a feature of early-stage societies and literacy as a later development.

## 5.5. Conclusion

Following on from the previous chapter, in which the way in which ideas about the universal progress of human societies allowed Scots songs that were being sung by writers' contemporaries to be considered as historic source materials were examined, this chapter examined the interaction between such ideas about universal human progress and ideas specific to the Scottish context of the work in the use of non-song, written sources in the writing of Scottish music history. The work of writers on Lowland song

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<sup>32</sup> Dauney 1838, *Ancient Scottish Melodies*, 130.

such as Tytler and Thomson showed the use of sources with only tenuous links to Scots songs to calibrate the rate of historical change in song from simple to complex, thus demonstrating the primacy of the ideas about the universal progress of human societies that were examined in the previous chapter. Perhaps surprisingly, the later work of Ritson, Motherwell and Dauney demonstrated again the impact of ideas about the universal nature of early societies on the selection and use of the type of source material: oral material was used primarily for the music history of early societies or social groups, since early societies were believed to have been illiterate; and written material reserved for societies or groups believed to have developed beyond this early state into more developed, and consequently literate, societies. Such ideas about the universal progress of human societies were inflected with ideas specific to the Scottish context: while non-song sources were used to calibrate the rate of change in Lowland and Border song histories, the use of non-song sources in Highland music history presents instead a long period of unchanging practice, thus the idea of Highlanders as the most primitive group in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Scotland appears in the writing of Scottish music history. Ritson's insistence on the use of written sources to illustrate literate societies results in careful focussing of his music-historical enquiry to a period in Scottish music history which he considers likely to represent the beginning of widespread literacy. His body of documentary evidence thus begins in the thirteenth century, placing ten lines from Andrew of Wyntoun's *Chronicle* at the head of the canon of sources, a place they have not really ceded since. In the work of Motherwell and Dauney, the written sources used by Ritson are used to add detail to the picture of the gradual musical development of the ancestors of the metropolitan elite, in contrast to the music history of pastoral society which continued to be illustrated by orally preserved sources or current remnants of historic practice. Motherwell and Dauney thus bring the written sources used by Ritson within the model of parallel traditions discussed in chapter 4. In so doing, these specifically Scottish written sources came to support perceptions drawn ultimately from the need to accommodate Scottish music and its history within the universal model of historical progress.

## 6. “The æra of Scotish music and Scotish song is now passed”: Social Change and the Narrative of Music History

The æra of Scotish music and Scotish song is now passed. The pastoral simplicity and natural genius of former ages no longer exist: a total change of manners has taken place in all parts of the country, and servile imitation usurped the place of original invention. All, therefor, which now remains to be wished, is that industry should exert itself to retrieve and illustrate the reliques of departed genius.<sup>1</sup>

So wrote Joseph Ritson in the conclusion to his 1794 discussion of the history of Scottish song, dramatically depicting the destruction of the Scottish musical past through a large-scale social change.

The previous two chapters examined how the similarities between the features that Ramsay had claimed were characteristic of ancient song and the characteristics of early societies in the Enlightenment model of universal historical progress allowed the continued perception that Scots songs were ancient into the later eighteenth century. It was argued that the influence of the universal model of historical progress underpinned far more than the simple perception that Scots songs were ancient, in addition the model underpinned a number of narratives of Scottish music history: the narrative of scalic development over time; the narrative of corruption of Scots songs over time; and the narrative of parallel traditions of preservation amongst the rural poor and the metropolitan elite. The inflection of the model in ways specific to the Scottish context was seen in the way that the model permitted the collection of further purportedly ancient songs and ballads from the Highlands and Lowland and Border rural poor, societies seen as Scottish examples of societies which remained in an early stage of their historical development. The impact of these perceptions of the Highlands and the Lowland and Border rural poor was further seen in the way in which sources which were not Scots songs were deployed in the writing of Scottish music history. In the work of Joseph Ritson perceptions about the oral nature of early societies and the later development of literacy, which were part of the universal model of historical progress,

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<sup>1</sup> Ritson 1794, *Scotish Song*, cx.

were accommodated to the Scottish context, to allow him to use written sources of song to write the music history from the point at which he believed historical circumstances had resulted in Scotland becoming a literate country.

The current chapter examines the role of perceptions of a series of Scottish social or cultural changes in the writing of Scottish music history: the Reformation and the seventeenth century, the decline of feudalism and the eighteenth-century modernisation of the countryside. It will be argued that Scottish music historians included such events in their narratives to explain discrepancies between their ideas about the universal musical past and the surviving source materials, and in so doing created further music-historical narrative. The role of these historical events provides, then, another example of the interaction of ideas about the universal nature of the past and ideas about specifically Scottish historical events in the writing of Scottish music history.

### **6.1.Ramsay of Ochtertyre's Narrative and Social Change**

Ramsay of Ochtertyre's 1791 article 'On Scottish Songs', published in *The Bee* provides a good example. After a short introduction, in which he defines the purpose of his article as an enquiry into the "use and progress of the admired songs that are sung to melodies, peculiar to the Scottish Low-landers", Ramsay of Ochtertyre addresses "some circumstances that seem to impeach the high antiquity of these admired lays": the absence of their names in the list given in "Scotland's complaint", and from the sixteenth-century Bannatyne and Maitland collections. Although he accepts that this situation may have been partly because the songs "of the common people" were preserved orally may not have been of interest to the compilers of written sources in general, he cannot wholly subscribe to this view since "Supposing the taste of the father to have been vitiated by fashion, the sweet touches of nature they contain, would have recommended them to a female mind", such as that of the daughter of Sir Richard Maitland.<sup>2</sup>

Ramsay of Ochtertyre's solution is to propose that:

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<sup>2</sup> Ramsay of Ochtertyre 1791, *On Scottish Songs*, 201-203. Subsequent references to this article appear in parentheses in the main text.

In a matter where no light can be had from history or tradition, one would be disposed to conclude, that the sweetest, and most beautiful tunes, were at least clothed with new words after the union of the crowns, when there was no longer any thing to fear from enemies...

He associates this political change with wide-reaching social change in the Borders: "The inhabitants of the borders, who had formerly been warriors from choice, and husbandmen from necessity, either quitted the country, or were transformed into real shepherds, easy in their circumstances, and satisfied with their lot". There were associated changes with the decline of the pre-Union feudal system: Ramsay of Ochtertyre notes approvingly that profits were higher, yet the positive parts of the previous system were retained "Some sparks of the chivalry of their forefather remained, sufficient to inspire elevation of sentiment, and gallantry towards the fair sex". This change in the occupations and manners of the Borderers had led to the change in words noted above: "In this happy state of innocence, ease, and serenity of temper, the love of poetry and music could hardly fail to maintain its ground, though it might at length assume a form more suited to the circumstances of the country". Minstrels, a relic of pre-Union days were discouraged, and shepherds began instead to write of love in "the language of pure nature" (204-205).

Ramsay of Ochtertyre depicts oral composition and preservation amongst the Border shepherds, with occasional records made by "strangers of taste, who were occasionally in the country" until the work of Allan Ramsay. He credits Allan Ramsay with preventing songs from "perish[ing] irrecoverably", yet suggests that "spight of all their industry, pieces of unquestioned merit, and considerable antiquity, might elude their search, and lie concealed in a remote district, or a single family, till chance threw some stranger in the way, who took care to make them public". He also writes about Allan Ramsay's rewriting of some songs, describing this as "dressing them up in an English idiom", but noting that this "signified little to the persons that were to sing them, as they could not help giving them a provincial cast". Ramsay of Ochtertyre continues that he does not expect the younger readers of *The Bee* "whose prejudices are all English" to understand the linguistic situation at the time of Allan Ramsay. He uses this as a springboard to voice the opinion that "had we retained a court and parliament of our own, the tongues of the two sister-

kingdoms would indeed have differed like the Castilian and Portuguese; but each would have had its own classics, not in a single branch, but in the whole circle of polite literature" (206-209).

Ramsay of Ochtertyre presents a narrative of three parts divided by moments of social change: before the Union of the Crowns; between the Union of the Crowns and the Union of the Parliaments, and after the Union of the Parliaments. In addition to structuring a narrative of Scottish music history, points of social change allow him to continue to see elements of songs as older than the early seventeenth century, despite his unease at their absence from written sources. The use of the social change from martial to pastoral society in his narrative allows Ramsay of Ochtertyre to date pastoral texts to the inter-Union period and to account for their nature. It also allows him to integrate an isolated law against minstrels of the late sixteenth century into a larger narrative. The place of the Union of the Parliaments in his narrative permits some criticism of the present. Ramsay of Ochtertyre's depiction of the Scottish musical past, then, is inextricably bound up with his perceptions of the role of large-scale social changes specific to Scottish history.

Although he is relatively unusual in selecting the Unions of 1603 and 1707 as catalysts for social change, Ramsay of Ochtertyre's work shows the ways in which such ideas could structure Scottish music history on a variety of levels, from the grand narratives to the inclusion of single primary sources such as laws. Having examined the variety of effects of ideas about social change on one source in this way, the next section will examine the role of different moments of social change across the body of writing on Scottish music history as a whole.

## **6.2.Narratives of Destruction**

Ramsay of Ochtertyre's impetus to refer to the Union of 1603 in his narrative of Scottish music history was the lack of written evidence of songs known to him in sixteenth-century sources. His invocation of the Union relies on the assumptions that music prior to the Union had been like that song known to him and his readers, despite the lack of other

forms of evidence to support this. Ramsay of Ochtertyre is not alone in invoking a large-scale social change to account for a lack of evidence of song known to his readers prior to the change. Richard Hartley Cromeck and William Dauney both use the Scottish Reformation of the 1560s to support their arguments that there must have been songs like the ones known to their readers prior to the Reformation in the absence of other forms of evidence.

Cromeck argues that:

We may safely premise, that many of the most valuable traditional songs and ballads perished in those afflicting times of Reformation and bloodshed which belong to queen Mary, to Charles, and to James. A great change then took place in the Scottish character:- the glowing vivacity and lightsomeness of the Caledonian Muses were quenched in the gloomy severity of sour fanatic enthusiasm, and iron-featured bigotry. The profanity of Song was denounced from the pulpit, and the holy lips of Calvinism would not suffer pollution by its touch: Dancing, to which it is nearly allied, was publicly rebuked, attired in fornicator's sackcloth. The innocent simplicity and airiness of song gave way to holier emanations; to spiritualized ditties, and to the edifying cadence of religious, reforming cant.

Cromeck's reasons for making this assumption seem to rest on a perception, expressed in the following paragraph, that Allan Ramsay had relatively little material to work with: "His beautiful collections rekindled the smothered embers of Lyric Poetry".<sup>3</sup>

Dauney similarly sees the Reformation as leading to the loss of the song of the past:

It is certainly not a little extraordinary, that songs and melodies, which for ages had been universally sung and played throughout the land, forming the occasional recreation of all classes from the prince to the peasant, should thus have been allowed to die away, and "leave no sign." There is reason to believe that in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, if not before, the best of them had been committed to notation, and the ravages of time, alone, are scarcely sufficient to account for their disappearance. We must add to these, the temper, manners, and circumstances of the times. In Scotland, about the year 1550, the active measures which were resorted to by the ecclesiastical and civil power for putting down all rhymes and ballads reflecting upon the

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<sup>3</sup> Cromeck 1810, *Remains*, iii-iv.

Roman Catholic hierarchy and its members, and by which every Ordinary was empowered to search his diocese for all books and papers of that nature, must, in their operation, have occasioned the destruction of many valuable collections and pieces of popular music with which the offensive productions had been, either casually or intentionally, associated. And in the era immediately succeeding the Reformation, some idea may be formed of the extent to which this species of composition was discountenanced by the dominant Church party, from the "Compendium of Godly and Spiritual Songs," of which we have treated in another place. The next century exhibits the spectacle of an almost universal severity of manners, the consequence of austere and fanatical notions ; - music, along with dancing and every innocent amusement, prohibited as dangerous and sinful, and indiscriminately thrust into the same category with vices and profligacy of the worst description. When we look back to the character and habits of the people during this part of our history; further, when we take into view the great questions which successively agitated the public mind during the period to which we refer, - Popery and Protestantism - Prelacy and Presbytery – King and Commonwealth – and, finally, the establishment of our constitutional rights and privileges; we need not wonder, that there should have been little leisure and less inclination to record or preserve the light and fleeting effusions of musical genius, and that it should have been reserved for an age of greater freedom from austerity and intolerance, to revive and awaken the cultivation of this art, and with it, the almost forgotten strains of former ages.<sup>4</sup>

Like Cromeck, Dauney's reference to the Reformation is based on the assumption that there must once have been more musical material than survives in his time. Dauney, however, supports his case in more detail; he supports his argument that much song must have been destroyed by those protecting the Catholic hierarchy in the lead up to the Reformation by reference to pieces of legislation. He refers in footnotes to a statute of the provincial council of clergy held at Linlithgow in 1549 against those found in possession of books of songs against the clergy, and an Act of Parliament of 1551 which prohibited the publication of books, including of ballads and songs, without a royal licence.<sup>5</sup> He supports his argument of the severity of manners of the seventeenth century by reference to the Minutes of the Presbytery of St Andrews from the 1650s.

Dauney's argument that the Reformation must have led to the loss of musical material is itself based on the assumption that songs like those known to Dauney's readers must

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<sup>4</sup> Dauney 1838, *Ancient Scottish Melodies*, 133-134.

<sup>5</sup> Dauney 1838, *Ancient Scottish Melodies*, 33. The Act in question is in fact a 1552 Act, not 1551, and can be seen at <http://www.rps.ac.uk/trans/A1552/2/26>

both have been performed prior to the Reformation and written down. Dauney's reasons for assuming both are illuminated later in the 'Dissertation': he assumes that "national" songs were performed because:

We have never heard of any publication of Scotish airs during the sixteenth century, in the shape here mentioned; but with so many accomplished musicians as we appear then to have possessed,- to say nothing of harpers, luters, violars, pipers, flute and cornet players, &c., it is impossible but that a large proportion of the music which was then composed and performed had been of a national kind, or, as the Information touching the chapel-royal (which of itself, from the regulation there specified, furnishes indubitable proof of its early popularity and excellence) expresses it, "Old Scottish Music".<sup>6</sup>

He assumes that the music was written down by taking Burney's account of the collecting and publishing of contemporary Neapolitan music as a parallel case.<sup>7</sup> Dauney builds conjecture on conjecture in this way to create a picture of a vibrant, literate pre-Reformation song culture and then has to use the destruction of the Reformation to account for the lack of survival of that culture into his own day since, as already quoted above "the ravages of time, alone, are scarcely sufficient to account for their disappearance".

Dauney's account of the role of the destruction of the Reformation quoted above does not stop with the events of the sixteenth century, he sees the destructive nature of the seventeenth century as continuing the process of loss of musical material. In this he echoes Pinkerton's earlier 1786 characterisation of the seventeenth century, in a passage in which he explains why the material from the manuscript collections of Sir Richard Maitland of Lethington (1496–1586) had not previously been published:

the seventeenth century, fatal to the good taste of Italy, threw a total night over Scotland: a night of Gothic darkness, haunted by the most shocking spectres of frenzy and fanaticism, mingling in infernal uproar with still more horrible phantoms of ecclesiastic vengeance, bigoted persecution, civil tyranny, slaughter, and slavery. Passing, almost without respite, from the

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<sup>6</sup> Dauney 1838, *Ancient Scottish Melodies*, 170-171.

<sup>7</sup> Burney 1776, *General History*, Vol. 3, 214, cited in Dauney 1838, *Ancient Scottish Melodies*, 170.

ecclesiastic dæmonarchy of Land to the civil dæmonarchy of Lauderdale; from the rancour of hot-brained priest, to the savage madness of a brutal peer;

He continues that, as a result, Scotland's "unhappy sons....overwhelmed with anguish, could never attend to science, nor the arts of elegance".<sup>8</sup> Pinkerton's use of the seventeenth century as a destructive moment in the history of the arts in Scotland is distinctly different from Dauney's use and to Cromeck's and Dauney's use of the Reformation, however. Pinkerton has manuscript evidence of the material he presented prior to the social change to which he attributes a lack of interest in that material. In contrast, both Cromeck and Dauney note the lack of evidence of song prior to the Reformation.

The Reformation was not only invoked in discussions of the loss of song: in his 1784 essay 'Of the Influence of Poetry and Music Upon the Highlanders' Ramsay of Ochtertyre looks to the Reformation as one of the factors contributing to the decline of the Highland bards. Ramsay of Ochtertyre appears to have perceived bards as an important feature of ancient societies in general, indicated by his references to the role of the bards amongst the Irish and ancient Greeks.<sup>9</sup> He sees the Highlands as a primitive society:

It is surely curious that a set of men, who disappeared in Greece not long after the death of Homer, should have been found last of all in the wilds of Scotland and Ireland ... But the resemblance between the people of the heroic times, and the more primitive Highlanders, is by no means confined to this feature (10).

The manners of the Highlands are depicted as largely static throughout the essay (see for example pp. 12, 14), a factor necessary for the continued perception that Highlanders of his day were remnants of a primitive society. This presents a problem for Ramsay of Ochtertyre's account of the bards: since the bard was not a significant part of Highland society as he was writing, that society must have undergone some form of change, "It is difficult, however, to account for the declension of the Highland bards, whilst ancient manners and customs were carefully cherished". Ramsay of Ochtertyre argues that the

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<sup>8</sup> Pinkerton 1786, *Ancient Scotish Poems*, Vol. 1, iii-iv.

<sup>9</sup> No author [John Ramsay of Ochtertyre] 1784, *Influence of Poetry and Music*, 9-10. Subsequent references to this publication will appear in parentheses in the main text.

decline of the bards was the result of two social changes: firstly, the increased concentration of power in the monarchy which led to an absent nobility, converted to fashionable, foreign, court manners; and secondly, an increase in literacy amongst the highest ranks of Highland society as a result of the need to engage with literate religious debate in the aftermath of the Reformation, “book-learning has ever proved fatal to unlettered poets” (10).

Neither Ramsay of Ochtertyre, nor Cromeck, nor Dauney are impartial commentators on the Reformation. Ramsay of Ochtertyre describes the highest ranks of society in the post-Reformation period as “degenerate” (10). Cromeck and Dauney characterise the views of the reformers as “sour fanatic enthusiasm, and iron-featured bigotry” and “fanatical notions”, respectively. Elsewhere, Dauney expresses a similar opinion in his discussion of *The Gude and Godlie Ballatis*, a publication in which previously profane songs were given new sacred texts:

from the unhallowed allusions which it suggested – the indecency with which it jumbled together images the most sacred and profane – and the familiarity which it introduced in addressing the Deity – was calculated to do more real harm to the cause of religion, than the evil which it was intended to put down, and more than all the pious efforts of their authors could ever repair. The monstrous effect of the *seria mista jocis*, in matters of a religious nature, has seldom been so glaringly exemplified as in some of the “godly and spiritual songs,” as they were strangely miscalled, to be found in this Compendium.<sup>10</sup>

Ramsay of Ochtertyre, Cromeck and Dauney were not alone in viewing the Reformation through critical eyes, by the mid eighteenth century developments in ecclesiastical historiography and the values of the present had resulted in even William Robertson, the moderator of the General Assembly, the governing body of the Church of Scotland, in 1763, regarding parts of the Reformation critically.

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<sup>10</sup> Dauney 1838, *Ancient Scotish Melodies*, 35. Although *The Gude and Godlie Ballatis* is the name commonly used to refer to this publication this phrase is actually drawn from the subtitle of the publication. The title of the 1567 edition begins “A Compendious Book of Godly and Spiritual Songs ...”, a title that Dauney uses elsewhere in his dissertation. The main title varies between the different editions. To compare the title pages of the extant editions see Mitchell 1898, *Compendious Book of Godly and Spiritual Songs*.

In the early eighteenth century, historians such as William Jameson and Sir James Dalrymple had presented the Reformation as the sixteenth-century restoration of Scotland's ancient Culdaic church.<sup>11</sup> From the 1730s, however, these perceived ancient roots were challenged by the work of Father Thomas Innes in which he suggested that the Scots had not been converted to Christianity as early as had been previously thought. Cutting off these roots had the effect of shortening the history of Presbyterianism to the two centuries since the Reformation. Presbyterianism became a religion instituted at the Reformation in defiance of the monarchy. In the Scotland of the 1730s, in which a proportion of ministers defied the government in refusing to read proclamations condemning the Porteous Riots of 1736, the perception that the reformed religion was rebellious at its inception and remained dangerously rebellious was potentially highly damaging to the kirk (186-189).

The solution was to re-write the history of the Reformation in order to present the bloodier parts as a product of sixteenth-century manners, rather than as characteristic of Presbyterianism. In his 1993 book *Subverting Scotland's Past* Colin Kidd focusses on William Robertson's 1759 *History of Scotland* as a prime example of this new historiography of the Reformation. In his *History*, as Kidd puts it, Robertson "...treated the Reformation as the product of a particular historical situation, draining the Reformation principles of totemic authority". In doing so, Robertson was able to look at the down sides of the Reformation, its exacerbation of certain constitutional problems and the heightening of existing feuds through the addition of confessional differences leading to a decrease in the stability needed for the development of commerce and civil liberty, for example. Similarly, the destruction of libraries and books of 1561 was portrayed as an irregularity and not as part of Presbyterian policy (192-196).

Like Ramsay of Ochtertyre, Cromeck and Dauney's perceptions of the Reformation, Pinkerton and Dauney take an equally dim view of the seventeenth century. Pinkerton's language of "ecclesiastical vengeance", "civil tyranny, slaughter, and slavery" and "the

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<sup>11</sup> Kidd 1993, *Subverting Scotland's Past*, 22-23. Subsequent references to this publication will appear in parentheses in the main text.

savage madness of a brutal peer” show his strongly negative views. Dauney characterises the same period as one of “austerity and intolerance”. Such views of the seventeenth century were not uncommon, historians such as William Robertson and John Millar, for example, characterising it as an age of despotism (138-139). Pinkerton makes reference to one Lauderdale as a particular example of the “savage madness” of the times. This is probably intended for John Maitland, Duke of Lauderdale (1616-1682). Although initially a negotiator for the Covenanting parties through to 1660s and 70s Maitland became involved in increasingly repressive measures against Presbyterians. Pinkerton’s perceptions of Lauderdale align with the contemporary historiography, as described by Ronald Hutton in his 2004 article:

Lauderdale suffered two of the worst misfortunes which can attend the posthumous reputation of a statesman: that his enemies left popular and much-admired memoirs while his friends did not, and that the policies with which he was associated were subsequently totally defeated and discredited. He had personally offended the most influential Whig and the most influential Tory historian of his age, Gilbert Burnet and Clarendon respectively, and their portraits of him are the more influential for being remarkably similar—of a ruthless, selfish, and unprincipled politician whose sole aim was his own promotion and survival. This was enhanced by the fact that he moved from being one of the foremost representatives of the covenanters to one of their foremost persecutors. As their cause triumphed in 1690, and the kirk of Scotland was finally remade in their image, with Robert Wodrow providing its heroic history and martyrology, it was inevitable that Lauderdale should be implanted in national folk memory as a debauched tyrant, serving an unworthy and absentee monarch. That image was reinforced, like so much else in that folk memory, by Sir Walter Scott.<sup>12</sup>

Dauney and Pinkerton’s portrayal of the seventeenth century being a period of great upheaval has its roots in more widely held ideas about the nature of the seventeenth century.

In contrast to their views of the seventeenth century, both Pinkerton and Dauney present the eighteenth century as an “age of greater freedom”, another perception that was more widely held. Eighteenth-century Whigs saw the Reformation as concerned with

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<sup>12</sup> Hutton 2004, *Maitland*.

both religious and civil liberty and consequently saw the Glorious Revolution of the late seventeenth century as a further “instalment” of the Reformation leading to the greater religious and civil liberties enjoyed in the eighteenth century.<sup>13</sup> David Allan, in his 1993 book *Virtue, Learning and the Scottish Enlightenment*, makes an argument which suggests a further context for Pinkerton and Dauney’s views beyond perceptions of the ecclesiastical and political events of the seventeenth century. In presenting their work as the product of an “age of greater freedom” Pinkerton and Dauney participate in a wider contemporary discourse which presented the historiographical work of the Scottish Enlightenment as a revolutionary break with the methods of the past. Allan argues that this sense of a new beginning in historiographical method was not in fact borne out by a comparison of previous and Enlightenment publications: the introduction of scientific and philosophical method into the writing of history was not revolutionary - it had already been attempted in the seventeenth century by writers such as Hobbes and Descartes; and the common view of an analogy between the scientific ideal of experimentation and the historiographical collection of past experiences remained simply analogous.

Previous Scottish historians were perceived to have been working under unfavourable social conditions, and so to some extent their faults could be excused; in 1755 the *Edinburgh Review* praised historians of the past who had successfully written history “amid all the gloom of these times”. Allan argues that it was the contrast between the social conditions under which past and eighteenth-century historians were working which came to underpin the sense that the historiography of the Enlightenment was revolutionary. Historians such as David Hume, Alexander Kincaid, James Guthrie and William Semple referred to the idea of a new political and social milieu as part of their characterisation of an intellectual revolution in history.<sup>14</sup> Pinkerton and Dauney’s selection of the seventeenth century as a destructive period for music history should then be considered in light of their perception of the eighteenth century as a fortunate revival

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<sup>13</sup> Fearnley-Sander 1990, *Philosophical History and the Scottish Reformation*, 329. Fearnley-Sander cites Gilbert Burnet’s early eighteenth-century work (1679-1715), but notes his continuing influence on Robertson and Hume.

<sup>14</sup> Allan 1993, *Virtue, Learning and the Scottish Enlightenment*, 148-158.

in interest in the music of the past; the perception of the turmoil of the seventeenth century had wider currency in defining the advantages of the eighteenth.

Cromek and Dauney in particular had little written evidence of pre-Reformation Scottish song, yet a strong belief that a vital pre-Reformation song culture had existed. Contemporary perceptions of the destructive nature of the Reformation and the seventeenth century allowed them to construct a picture in which pre-Reformation music had been destroyed, accounting for the lack of written evidence.

For Ramsay of Ochtertyre, Cromek and Dauney, seeking to produce a narrative of Scottish music history which explained the lack of written evidence of songs known to them prior to the mid sixteenth century, and a decline in the status of bards in an otherwise static society, the Reformation in contemporary perception had all of the destructive characteristics required. For Dauney and Pinkerton the perceived religious and political turbulence of the seventeenth century could explain continued neglect of the music of the past and therefore also the place of Ramsay at the head of its revival as recently as the early eighteenth century. Contemporary perceptions of the Reformation and the seventeenth century as destructive can therefore account for the key place of these historical events in the narratives of Scottish music history created by these writers.

Like Ramsay of Ochtertyre's 1791 work, however, the Reformation was not the only large-scale social change used to form the narratives of Scottish music history. There was a further social/cultural change which Pinkerton, Ramsay of Ochtertyre and Dauney perceived to have had an effect on the performers of historic music: the decline of chivalry and feudalism.

In the case study which introduced the discussion of ideas about the impact of social and cultural changes on music history at the beginning of this chapter we saw how Ramsay of Ochtertyre attributed a perceived change in the history of song to social changes brought about as a consequence of the Union of the Crowns of 1603 and the decline of the feudal system. Amongst these changes was the decline in the minstrels, an idea Ramsay of

Ochtertyre supports by reference to an Act of Parliament of 1579.<sup>15</sup> Ramsay of Ochtertyre refers to the same Act in his 1784 essay on Highland music, suggesting that his reference to the increased concentration of power in the monarchy, which he perceives as leading to the decline of the bards, might also refer to the decline of the feudal system, although this is not made explicit.<sup>16</sup>

Pinkerton had earlier associated the decline of minstrels with the decline of the feudal system, writing that, during the fourteenth century, “a gradual change of the manners of chivalry brought neglect and contempt on the bards, and after on the minstrels in both kingdoms”. He also links this change to “the first dawn of science” which showed that the compositions of the bards and minstrels were not historical truths. He supports his view of the contempt of the bards with a passage from William Dunbar’s ‘The Papyngo’ in which “common bardis” appear in the same class as “Blasphematours” and “beggaris”.<sup>17</sup>

The association between the decline of the feudal system and the decline of bards and minstrels continued in the work of Dauney. Writing of bards Dauney states that in Scotland “the decline of the feudal system equally served to annihilate their independence, and to determine their fate”. He argues for a similar decline amongst minstrels over the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: he writes of a statue of 1471 that,

Whatever, therefore, might have been their [the minstrels’] pristine status, its lustre had been considerably diminished long before the passing of the statute to which we have above referred, and the privilege there reserved to them of wearing silks in doublet, gown, and cloak, with the share allotted to

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<sup>15</sup> The Act in question reads in translation as: “†Forasmuch as there are sundry lovable acts of parliament made by our sovereign lord's most noble progenitors for putting an end to masterful and idle beggars, putting away of sorners and provision for the poor, bearing that none shall be forced to beg neither to burgh nor to land between 14 and 70 years, that such as make themselves fools and are bards or other such vagabonds, being apprehended, shall be put in the king's ward and irons so long as they have any goods of their own to live on.... And that it may be known what manner of persons are meant to be strong and idle beggars and vagabonds and worthy of the punishment before specified,... all minstrels, songsters and tale-tellers not avowed in special service by some of the lords of parliament or great barons or by the head burghs and cities for their common minstrels”. No author 2012, *Acts of Parliament 1579*.

<sup>16</sup> See No author [John Ramsay of Ochtertyre] 1784, *Influence of Poetry and Music*, 10.

<sup>17</sup> Pinkerton 1786, *Ancient Scottish Poems*, Vol. 1, lxiii-lxxiv.

them along with the heralds, in the fines thereby imposed, were probably the last compliments which the legislature ever thought of bestowing upon them.

He supports his argument that minstrels fell from favour after 1471 with a footnote in which he writes, “In proof of this, see another Act of the Scottish Parliament, 1581, c. 113, against “the excesse of coastlie cleithing,” in which *minstrels are not excepted*”.<sup>18</sup>

Although each of these treatments of the decline of bards/minstrels uses different sources, they all weave scant written primary sources into a denser narrative of decline underpinned by the idea of the decline in the feudal system.

Feudalism “was of more than antiquarian interest in Scotland in the eighteenth century” as Peter Burke puts it.<sup>19</sup> Lowland Scotland was undergoing a process of de-feudalisation in the eighteenth century, and after the Jacobite Rebellion of 1715 feudal law became an important subject of debate with regard to the Highlands as feudal laws were seen as the means by which such a large army had been raised in such a short space of time.<sup>20</sup> Within historiography the historical origin of feudalism in Scotland was an important topic of discussion because the question of whether the pre-Union Scottish parliament could be considered as a feudal king’s baron court or as a non-feudal body capable of limiting the power of the monarch had implications for the contemporary constitution (131-136).

Although these aspects of feudalism put it at the forefront of public debate they primarily concerned the political and legal structures associated with feudal landholding with an eighteenth-century focus far removed from the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century process of decline invoked by Scottish music historians. In the work of historians such as Sir Walter Scott and Gilbert Stuart, however, historic feudalism had not simply been a system of land holding and the political and legal structures arising from that land holding: feudalism was also associated with chivalry and martial manners. These manners were all that stood against feudalism becoming an oppressive system characterised by William Robertson in 1759 as:

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<sup>18</sup> Dauney 1838, *Ancient Scottish Melodies*, 64, 78 and fn.

<sup>19</sup> Burke 1980, *Scottish Historians and the Feudal System*, 539.

<sup>20</sup> Kidd 1993, *Subverting Scotland’s Past*, 155, 109-110. Subsequent references to this publication will appear in parentheses in the main text.

subjected at once to the absolute will of a monarch, and to the oppressive jurisdiction of an aristocracy, it suffered all the miseries peculiar to both these forms of government. Its kings were despotic; its nobles were slaves and tyrants; and the people groaned under the rigorous domination of both.<sup>21</sup>

Scott and Stuart perceived a decline in feudal manners in the past resulting in the development of such a despotic system (261).

Given the currency of debate about feudalism and the particular focus on manners by writers such as Scott and Stuart, it is perhaps unsurprising to find Scottish music historians referring to the decline of feudalism to draw a larger picture of Scottish music history from the scattered references to minstrels and bards in historic legislation and literature. Like Cromek and Dauney's use of the Reformation to explain the lack of written evidence of recognised songs prior to the sixteenth century, writers invoke a social change that was the subject of eighteenth-century debate to support a narrative that is constructed on scant source materials and a large quantity of preconceptions.

In the quotation which headed this chapter, Ritson identified a change in the manners of the country, from "pastoral simplicity" and "natural genius" to "servile imitation", which had led to the loss of the music of the past. Although Ritson does not explicitly specify when this change had occurred it is possible to infer from the latest in the list of publications which he evaluates prior to this statement, the *Scots Musical Museum*, published from 1787, that the change had occurred in the recent past.<sup>22</sup> This social change fulfils a dual function in Ritson's writing: firstly, it provides a pivotal point around which to structure a narrative of degeneration from a more vibrant musical past, in the same way that the Reformation did for the writers discussed in the previous section; and secondly, it provides the justification for Ritson's publication as a whole in the idea of retrieving the "relicues of departed genius". Ritson is not alone in perceiving such a change.

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<sup>21</sup> Robertson, History, II. 248-52, cited in Kidd 1993, *Subverting Scotland's Past*, 183-184.

<sup>22</sup> See Ritson 1794, *Scotish Song*. Ritson's publication has two pages numbered cxix, this reference appears on the first of them.

Ramsay of Ochtertyre structures his 1784 essay thematically, covering areas such as the bards, types of song and the role of the harp. The sense of recent social change, however, emerges again and again with regard to the different themes: he characterises the practice of singing songs at work as “declining apace” (11); the practice of instrumental music at funerals “was retained by the more primitive inhabitants till of late years” (13); and “Though the pipers have survived their brethren, the harpers, almost a century, they themselves will, ere long, share the same fate” (14-15). Ramsay of Ochtertyre attributes these changes to a recent change in the manners of Highlanders, whereas “Till of very late years, they held novelty of every kind in abomination” (14), “The Highlanders have, perhaps, undergone more changes, in the course of the present century, than for a thousand years preceding” (12). The changes to which Ramsay of Ochtertyre refers are never quite specified, but some clues may be gleaned from his writing: he notes that the decline in singing at work is particularly marked amongst those Highlanders who had frequent contact with Lowlanders (11); he describes the “chieftains and gentry” as having their manners “formed on a new model” (15); and he contrasts the Highlanders with people from “commercial countries” (15). The perception that emerges is one of a change to Lowland, Anglicised, commercial society. Like Ritson’s perceptions of recent social change, Ramsay of Ochtertyre’s perceptions both form a turning point in his sense of the narrative of Scottish music history, and justify his writing of it:

In less than twenty years, it would be vain to attempt a collection of Highland music. Perhaps, it is rather late at present; but enough may be got to point out its genius and spirit. The remains of the harp tunes are in most immediate hazard, as all ranks of people are changing their modes of life, with wonderful rapidity. The pipe music is, no doubt, most entire; yet, from its being seldom noted down, a considerable part of it has already perished; and, ere long, the remainder will either be lost, or performed in a slovenly manner (15).

Cromek demonstrates similar perceptions. He states early on in his prefatory material that the purpose of his publication is to “...redeem some of those fine old ballads and songs ... such especially as have never before been published, and are floating on the breath of popular tradition”. In the historical essay which follows, Cromek constructs a

narrative which turns around a number of points of social or cultural change: the Reformation, discussed in the previous section; followed by the effects of the 1745 Jacobite risings; followed in turn by late eighteenth-century changes in the manners of the peasantry.

Cromek constructs a narrative of social change brought about through a number of factors: agricultural improvement, taxation, learning and increased sophistication. He writes that: "The Scottish peasantry have within these dozen years completely overturned their ancient customs. The hurrying progress of agriculture, with the load of taxes, call for heavier labours than the evening dance, or the gaieties of song". He expands on this idea in the following pages:

all the 'old use and wonts' of their fathers have almost entirely disappeared. They are certainly much better educated than ever; almost every pupil in the low-land schools being instructed in English grammar and in the rudiments of the Latin tongue. But they begin to lose their vigorous originality of character, by attempting to copy the more polished and artificial manners of their neighbours.

The effects of these changes on the musical life of the peasantry not only form the latest instalment in the narrative of Scottish music history, they also give the task "redeeming" historic songs in his publication urgency:

So great and rapid, indeed, has been the change, that in a few years the Songs and Ballads here selected would have been irrecoverably forgotten. The old cottars....are mostly dead in good old age; and their children are perusing the bustle of commerce, frequently in foreign climates ... all that can now be redeemed from the oblivious wreck of their genius is a few solitary fragments of Song!<sup>23</sup>

Like Cromek, Motherwell, writing seventeen years later, spends a large part of his introduction characterising the material presented in his collection. In amongst this, however, some elements of historical narrative appear, and, like Cromek, a social change in the countryside provides both a narrative element and the impetus for the publication. Having written about his collecting and presenting method, Motherwell writes:

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<sup>23</sup> Cromek 1810, *Remains*, ii, xviii, xx-xxi.

Though the field in which many have reaped, may, by this time, be well deemed nearly bare, yet much is still left for future skill and industry to glean. Those who enjoy opportunities of recovering traditional song will, it is to be hoped, not overlook them; for the time seems approaching that take the sickle who likes in hand, it will be vain to expect it can reap anything but stubble and profitless weeds. The changes which, within this half century, the manners and habits of our peasantry and labouring classes, with whom this song has been cherished, have undergone, are inimical to its further preservation. They have departed from the stern simplicity of their fathers, and have learned with the paltry philosophers, political quacks, and illuminated dreamers on Economick and Moral science, to laugh at the prejudices, beliefs, and superstitions of elder times. If they could separate, or if those follies they ape could separate, the chaff from the wheat, it were well; but in parting with the antiquated notions of other days, they part also with their wisdom and their virtues. The stream of innovation is flooding far and wide, and ancient land-marks are fast disappearing.<sup>24</sup>

In this passage Motherwell, Like Ritson and Cromek, presents a social change dating to the late eighteenth century: the use of the phrase “within this half century” dates the change to after 1780. Like Ritson, he characterises the changes as a loss of simplicity, and like Cromek, attributes them partly to the acquisition of learning. The changes have led, in Motherwell’s opinion, to the peasantry abandoning historic balladry, and to the danger of its loss.

In chapter 4, it was argued that writers looked to the pastoral society of the Lowlands and Borders and to Highland society for historic material because stadial theory allowed these societies to be seen as remnants of more primitive society. In the work of Ritson, Ramsay of Ochtertyre, Cromek and Motherwell these remnants of universally similar primitive societies are seen as rapidly modernising through agricultural improvement, learning and increased refinement of manners specific to the Scottish context.

In parallel with portrayals of the effects of the Reformation, the seventeenth century and the decline of feudalism, none of these writers offer compelling evidence to permit comparison of the state of music before the modernisation of the countryside with the

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<sup>24</sup> Motherwell 1827, *Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern*, cii-ciii.

state of music in their day. Cromeck and Motherwell's late birth dates, in 1770 and 1797 respectively, mitigate against their use of unstated personal experience

The similarity of the narrative of decline brought about by the modernisation of the countryside with the narratives of decline brought about by earlier historical events suggests a perception that the general trajectory of Scottish music history was perceived to be one of decline and loss. The position of the eighteenth-century modernisation of the countryside in music history should perhaps then be viewed as the latest event which happened to fit this narrative structure.

In the modernisation of the Highlands and Lowland countryside Ritson, Ramsay of Ochtertyre, Cromeck and Motherwell present another social change, around which, like the Reformation, the turbulent seventeenth century and the decline of feudalism, a narrative of Scottish music history was built. The more recent nature of the social change in the countryside, however, resulted in its other function as a catalyst for the collections of songs and ballads on which these writers base their historical discussions.

### **6.3.Conclusion**

In conclusion, a group of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century writers use the idea of historical social and cultural changes brought about by events such as the Reformation, the decline of feudalism and the modernisation of the countryside to structure their narratives of Scottish music history. In addition the idea of changes brought about by the modernisation of the countryside provides the impetus to collecting and the writing of Scottish music history based on those collections for some. The changes invoked are united by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century perceptions that they were destructive.

In each case there is at best scant evidence of an effect on historic song and so it seems likely that such events were selected by writers because contemporary perceptions of their destructive nature could provide a narrative of destruction which would explain the

lack of evidence available. Thus destructive events allowed writers to justify their preconception that Scotland's song culture had a long, extensive and vibrant past.

The grand narrative of Scottish music history for these writers becomes one of a vibrant musical past attacked throughout history as a consequence of destructive Scottish social and cultural changes. These narratives are complementary to the idea that early forms of society would maintain early forms of music: the prevailing model of historical progress did not allow for the alteration of ancient music by the rural poor, but the imposition of destructive historical events could cause such alteration. The appearance of destructive Scottish historical events in music histories, then, represents a further example of the way in which the interaction of ideas about the universal nature of the past, and ideas about specifically Scottish historical events shaped the writing of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Scottish music history.

## 7. Reasons for Writing Scottish Music History

We have seen in the preceding chapters that Scottish music history written between the 1720s and 1838 was primarily concerned with the history of Scotland's distinctive song and balladry. Allan Ramsay had labelled Scots song as "ancient" in the 1720s, and drawn out what he perceived to be its distinctive features: simplicity, pastorality and naturalness. These features were seen as characteristic of the productions of the past more widely. The perception that such features were characteristic of Scots song underpinned their continued consideration as ancient into the later eighteenth century, since these were seen as characteristic features in the wider Enlightenment model of historical progress. The efforts to accommodate Scots songs within this master narrative of historical progress from simple and pastoral to complex and commercial society resulted in the creation of historical narrative: the scale patterns used in Scots songs developed from simple to complex over time; Scots songs had gradually corrupted over time; and gradual corruption amongst the metropolitan elite had taken place at the same time as an uncorrupted tradition of preservation amongst the rural poor. Further ideas about the development of literacy over time led to the use of different types of source materials being used for the music history of different state of society. All of these aspects of the writing of Scottish music history relied upon ideas about the universal nature of the past.

Perceptions of the universal nature of the past were not the only factor, however, ideas specific to the Scottish context also shaped the writing of Scottish music history. Ramsay's claim that simplicity, naturalness and pastorality were markers of the antiquity of Scots songs was further reinforced by the contrasts he drew between Scots songs and Italian music and English verse, contrasts which, in the contemporary context, would have reinforced the connection between songs' defining features and their perceived antiquity. Later in the eighteenth century further ancient songs and ballads were collected from the rural poor of the Highlands and Lowlands and Borders since these were perceived to be Scottish examples of societies in an early stage of their development. Contemporary perceptions of the specific historical development of the Highlands and Lowlands/Borders

seem to be reflected in the differing use of primary non-song sources to support the history of song: the Highlands being portrayed as a society in which primitive music had been maintained unchanged over a long period. Ritson's use of dateable written sources for the history of song was carefully limited to the period during which he considered specific Scottish historical circumstances would have resulted in a literate society. The potential problem of the lack of evidence of Scots songs in the past was overcome by reference to specifically Scottish destructive historical events. It has been argued that the writing of Scottish music history was shaped by the interaction of ideas about universal historical progress with these ideas that were specific to the Scottish context.

Turning from this small-scale examination of the detail of Scottish music histories to the larger-scale, this current chapter examines writers' motivations for writing about Scottish music history at all. Like the preceding chapters, this examination shows again the importance of the interaction of twin factors at work in the writing of Scottish music history: Enlightenment perceptions of the value of history in general underpin some writer's work; yet concerns specific to eighteenth- and early nineteenth century Scotland also appear to have been motivating factors.

### **7.1.Music History and the Values of the Scottish Enlightenment**

The advantages found in history seem to be of three kinds, as it amuses the fancy, improves the understanding, and as it strengthens virtue. In reality, what more agreeable entertainment to the mind, than to be transported into the remotest ages of the world, and to observe human society, in its infancy, making the first faint essays towards the arts and sciences: To see the policy of government, and the civility of conversation refining by degrees, and every thing which is ornamental to human life advancing towards its perfection.

So wrote David Hume in his essay 'Of the Study of History' published in *Essays, Moral and Political* in 1741.<sup>1</sup> That Hume was neither the first, nor the only philosopher to write about the purposes of studying history demonstrates the importance of the discipline to the Scottish Enlightenment. In his 'An Inquiry Concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony,

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<sup>1</sup> Hume 1985, *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, 565-566. 'Of the Study of History' was published in *Essays, Moral and Political* in 1741 and continually published in editions of this title, and in *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects* until 1760.

'Design', published as part of *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* in 1725, the philosopher Francis Hutcheson discussed historical narrative.<sup>2</sup> He wrote that:

The superior pleasure then of history, must arise, like that of poetry, from the manners: when we see a character well drawn wherein we find the secret causes of a great diversity of seemingly inconsistent actions; or an interest of state laid open, or an artful view nicely unfolded, the execution of which influences very different and opposite actions as the circumstances may alter. Now this reduces the whole to an unity of design at least; and this may be observed in the very fables which entertain children, otherwise we cannot make them relish them.<sup>3</sup>

Like Turnbull, Adam Smith in his lecture on rhetoric and belles lettres of 5<sup>th</sup> January 1763, expressed the opinion that history is not just a form of entertainment.<sup>4</sup>

This environment, in which the purposes of history were subject to consideration and debate, then, was the Enlightenment philosophical context in which writers on Scottish music history were writing. In the following sections it will be argued that writings on Scottish music history answer to all three of Hume's advantages of history in general, but also go beyond Hume's ideas to answer some of the concerns specific to eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Scotland.

## 7.2. "Amus[ing] the fancy"

Like the writers above, many of the writers on Scottish music history emphasise the enjoyment that could be gained from the study of history. Macpherson wrote in 1762 that "Inquiries into the antiquities of nations afford more pleasure than any real advantage to mankind".<sup>5</sup> In 1783, William Tytler wrote that "The investigation of other pieces of our oldest music, by the same standard, may be an agreeable amusement for the curious".<sup>6</sup> In the same year Pinkerton ended his 'Dissertation on the Comic Ballad' with the comment that "It may perhaps be expected that, before closing this essay, I should offer some remarks on Scotish Music, a subject of much interest and curiosity to

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<sup>2</sup> Broadie 2001, *Scottish Enlightenment*, 45.

<sup>3</sup> Hutcheson 1994, *Philosophical Writings*, 35.

<sup>4</sup> Cited in Broadie 2001, *Scottish Enlightenment*, 52.

<sup>5</sup> MacPherson 1762, *Fingal*, i.

<sup>6</sup> Tytler 1783, *Poetical Remains*, 224.

every lover of that best sort of melody which speaks to the heart and passions".<sup>7</sup> In his later work Pinkerton wrote that he had written about poetic history, in which ideas about music history appear, as "amusement and relaxation from more important study".<sup>8</sup> Similar views continue to be expressed into the nineteenth century: Thomson emphasises the interest to be gained from such study "The subject is interesting and of some importance, in so far as importance can be said to belong to subjects of this nature",<sup>9</sup> and in 1837 Skene wrote that "There can be no greater enjoyment to the inquisitive mind than to find light where he has hitherto found nothing but darkness".<sup>10</sup>

Hume had particularly recommended the study of history to female readers in 'Of the Study of History':

There is nothing which I would recommend more earnestly to my female readers than the study of history, as an occupation, of all others, the best suited both to their sex and education, much more instructive than their ordinary books of amusement, and more entertaining than those serious compositions, which are usually to be found in their closets.<sup>11</sup>

Burney and Thomson subscribe to this viewpoint. Burney explicitly labelled the intended audience for his music history as "every Miss, who plays o' top the Spinet". He also recommended the study of music to young women since it was the only thing which could be enjoyed to excess without simultaneously corrupting, a point quoted by Thomson in 1822.<sup>12</sup>

### **7.3. "Improv[ing] the Understanding"**

#### **7.3.1. The History of Manners**

Such protestations of the lack of importance of writings on Scottish music history are challenged, however, by the writers themselves. One of the key disciplines of the Scottish

<sup>7</sup> Pinkerton 1783, *Select Scottish Ballads*, Vol. 2, xxxvii.

<sup>8</sup> Pinkerton 1786, *Ancient Scottish Poems*, Vol. 1, xvi.

<sup>9</sup> Thomson 1822, *Select Melodies of Scotland*, 19.

<sup>10</sup> Skene 1837, *Highlanders of Scotland*, xi.

<sup>11</sup> Hume 1985, *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, 563.

<sup>12</sup> Grant 1983, *Burney as Critic and Historian of Music*, 55, 116, 123; Thomson 1822, *Select Melodies of Scotland*, ii.

Enlightenment was the study of manners. The concept of “manners” was defined by Henry Home, Lord Kames in his 1774 *Sketches of the History of Man*: “There are peculiarities in the appearance, in the expressions, in the actions, which, in opposition to the manners of generality, are termed their manners... Manners therefore signify a mode of behaviour peculiar to a certain person, or to a certain nation”. The section on the progress of manners which follows this definition includes discussion of clothing, language and customs.<sup>13</sup> The importance of manners can be seen by his 1781 comment that “...upon manners chiefly depends the well-being of society”.<sup>14</sup>

Following Newton’s empirical work on the movement of planets in the seventeenth century, and the idea of the application of similar empirical methods in John Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* of 1690, Scottish Enlightenment thinkers sought to base their histories of social institutions on observation and the careful gathering of evidence.<sup>15</sup> George Turnbull, for example, quoted Newton’s argument directly in his *Treatise on Ancient Painting* on 1740.<sup>16</sup> History provided a further bank of such evidence for the study of institutions.<sup>17</sup>

The study of the history of manners was of interest to Enlightenment writers because, as John Gregory put it in 1765 “the civil and natural history of Mankind becomes a study not merely fitted to amuse and gratify curiosity, but a study subservient to the noblest views, to the cultivation and improvement of the Human Species”.<sup>18</sup> The study of history was seen as a tool to help to solve current problems.<sup>19</sup> Key Enlightenment thinkers including

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<sup>13</sup> Home 1774, *Sketches*, Vol. I, 181.

<sup>14</sup> Home 1781, *Loose Hints Upon Education*, 21.

<sup>15</sup> Berry 1997, *Social Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment*, 52; Allan 2002, *Scotland in the Eighteenth Century*, 138.

<sup>16</sup> Berry 1997, *Social Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment*, 52; Turnbull had been advocating such an approach since 1726, see Wood 2004, *George Turnbull*.

<sup>17</sup> Broadie 2001, *Scottish Enlightenment*, 55-57.

<sup>18</sup> Gregory 1765 *A Comparative View of the State and Faculties of Man, with those of the Animal World*, cited in Berry 1997, *Social Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment*, 54-55.

<sup>19</sup> Allan 2002, *Scotland in the Eighteenth Century*, 150.

Adam Smith, Adam Fergusson, Sir John Dalrymple, Alexander Kincaid, William Semple and Hugh Blair all covered aspects of the history of manners.<sup>20</sup>

Herd, Pinkerton, Leyden, Scott and Cromeck all present their collections as contributions to the history of manners. Ballad texts had been seen as a source of information about the past since 1723,<sup>21</sup> but this does not seem to have been taken up in Scotland until the late eighteenth century. Herd, Pinkerton, Scott and Cromeck all see the depictions of past behaviour in their song and ballad texts as providing information about the manners of the past. In the 1776 edition of his *Ancient and Modern Scottish Songs*, Herd wrote that such songs deserve the regard of the “Speculative and Refined, in so far as they exhibit natural and striking traits of the character, genius, taste and pursuits of the people.”<sup>22</sup> Pinkerton similarly simply writes that readers will “be delighted with equal pictures of manners; and unpolished diamonds of genuine poetry”.<sup>23</sup> Like Herd, Leyden uses the contribution his material makes to the history of manners to justify interest in material that might be considered to fall below the standards of refinement that the modern reader might expect:

However injudicious our ancient authors may be reckoned, in the selection of their materials, and in the arrangement of their topics; however defective in the arts of composition, and the polish of style, they can never divest themselves of the manners and habits of thinking, familiar to the age in which they lived. It is this circumstance, which stamps a real value on the rudest compositions of an early period; a value, which continually increases with their antiquity.<sup>24</sup>

Scott and Cromeck provide further examples moving into the nineteenth century.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Allan 1993, *Virtue, Learning and the Scottish Enlightenment*, 163.

<sup>21</sup> “Several fine Historians are indebted to *Historical Ballads* for all their Learning. For had not Curiosity, and a Desire of comparing these Poetical Works with ancient Records, first incited them to it, they never would have given themselves the Trouble of diving into History: And in this I have endeavoured to make our old Songs still more useful, by the Introductions which I have prefix'd to 'em; and in which is pointed out what is Fact and what Fiction.” (No Author [Ambrose Philips] 1723, *Collection of Old Ballads*, vii. Italics reversed.)

<sup>22</sup> Herd 1776, *Ancient and Modern Scottish Songs*, iii.

<sup>23</sup> Pinkerton 1786, *Ancient Scotch Poems*, Vol. 1, xviii.

<sup>24</sup> Leyden 1801, *Complaynt*, 72.

<sup>25</sup> See Scott 1802, *Minstrelsy*, cix-cx; Cromeck 1810, *Remains*, xxviii.

Campbell differs from these writers in that he sees the composition of the songs themselves, and not just the behaviour their texts depict, as an aspect of the history of manners. Like Herd and Leyden, however, he again presents the history of manners as reason for his interest in the “rude” art of the past: “the rise and progress of such attempts, however, rude, as an art, becomes an interesting object of enquiry to us, their descendants, who hold every thing connected with our progress in civil society in due veneration and regard”.<sup>26</sup>

Campbell is also in the minority in regarding the past as interesting simply for its role as an interesting precursor to the present. In this he is joined by Pinkerton, who, whilst suggesting that English readers will be delighted by reading poetry in a “Doric” predecessor of their own language, was of the opinion that “But it were to be wished that it should be regarded in both kingdoms equally as only as an ancient and a poetical language”, and no longer spoken.<sup>27</sup>

Herd, Leyden and Cromeck on the other hand all present the manners of the past depicted through the surviving musical material as having admirable traits. For Herd, it is their “natural and striking” nature. For Leyden it is the simplicity and naturalness of pastoral life which he contrasts with the “tedious melancolie orison” of the shepherds’ discussion of philosophy.<sup>28</sup> Cromeck describes the peasants whose music he presents as people of “original character”,<sup>29</sup> who preserved songs and ballads with the “spirit and rough nature of the olden times” (v) and had done so by “preserv[ing] themselves unpolluted with the stream of refinement which was sapping the ancient manners and character of their nobility and chieftains” (ix).

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<sup>26</sup> Campbell 1798, *Introduction to History of Poetry*, 51.

<sup>27</sup> Pinkerton 1786, *Ancient Scottish Poems*, Vol. 1, xvi- xvii.

<sup>28</sup> Leyden writes with approval of the “simple and natural description of shepherd life” (130) and of the music that shepherd’s produced from simple instrument made from readily available natural materials such as the “pipe maid of ane bleddir and of ane reid” and “corne pipe” (152-153). The “tedious and melancholie orison” appears on page 130.

<sup>29</sup> Cromeck 1810, *Remains*, xxvii. Subsequent references to this publication appear in parentheses in the main text.

Herd, Leyden and Cromeck, then, not only present music history as a contribution to the history of manners, they present the manners of the past as a critique of the nature of the present. Their concern about the nature of the present sits within a broader school of Enlightenment thought. Although the majority of Scots thinkers saw progress to the commercial state of society as a positive process, they also perceived problems with the refined nature of that state. The idea that civilised society led to vices which did not exist in the state of nature had been expressed by Rousseau.<sup>30</sup> Scottish thinkers such as Adam Ferguson, John Millar, Lord Kames and Gilbert Stuart worried about the “sources of internal decay, and the ruinous corruptions to which nations are liable, in the supposed condition of accomplished civility”, as Ferguson put it.<sup>31</sup> Some forms of luxury were perceived to have potentially pernicious effects, Lord Kames, for example, arguing that the luxury of life in commercial society could lead to decay in manners, patriotism and bravery.<sup>32</sup> Such decay of society was not, however, inevitable and could be avoided by the constant vigilance of its members.

The idea of corruption through increased refinement can be seen in a number of writings on Scottish music history. In addition to the Cromeck quotations above, Ramsay of Ochtertyre expresses similar perceptions in his 1784 essay on Highland music, when he describes those men of rank who became literate and consequently uninterested in bardism in the post-Reformation period as “degenerate”. Motherwell perceives the loss of the virtues of the peasantry through new learning.<sup>33</sup> By contrasting the music of the past with the music of the present, and by writing approvingly of the simplicity, naturalness and pastorality of the music of the past, writers on Scottish music history provide a critique of the manners of the present and suggest a better way. Their preoccupation with the musical traits of the past, then, reflects the broader preoccupation with the manners of the time.

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<sup>30</sup> Meek 1976, *Ignoble Savage*, 172.

<sup>31</sup> Meek 1976, *Ignoble Savage*, 155, 158; Spadafora 1990, *Idea of Progress*, 254, 277.

<sup>32</sup> Spadafora 1990, *Idea of Progress*, 277.

<sup>33</sup> [John Ramsay of Ochtertyre] 1784, *Influence of Poetry and Music*, 10; Motherwell 1827, *Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern*, cii-ciii.

### 7.3.2. Musical Distinctiveness and Other Enlightenment Disciplines

The features of the manners of the past which Herd, Leyden and Cromek identify as being presented by the music of the past are the same features that that music itself was seen to embody: the simplicity, naturalness and pastorality that were seen as key features from the late seventeenth century and which became key to the consideration of song as historic.

It was this distinctiveness which led to the use of historic Scottish song in writings on the “science of criticism” and the philosophy of poetry and music. In 1762 Lord Kames published *Elements of Criticism*, in which he aimed to discuss the good and the bad in the fine arts based on a rational system drawn from human nature; what he refers to as the “science of criticism”.<sup>34</sup> Kames wrote about the harmony and melody of music being “delightful” as part of his discussion of which poetry could be set as song.<sup>35</sup> In response, in 1765 Benjamin Franklin wrote to Lord Kames using old Scots tunes as a contrast to modern music, arguing that the pleasure of modern music was not the natural pleasure arising from melody or the harmony of sounds, which conversely could be found in simple old Scots tunes and was the reason that Scots tunes were so pleasing and popular. His passage regarding the harp playing of minstrels, which became widely quoted in Scottish music histories after appearing in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, demonstrated why the old Scots tunes displayed these particular features.

In the form in which it appears in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Franklin’s argument is used to a different purpose: as part of a discussion about the effects of the music of the ancients. Rousseau had attributed the power of national music to associations; the writer of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* article on the other hand attributes its power to “more permanent and less arbitrary....charms”, citing Franklin’s argument that the power of old Scots tunes lay in their simple and concordant unity of harmony and melody.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Home 1762, *Elements of Criticism*, 7-17.

<sup>35</sup> Home 1762, *Elements of Criticism*, 166.

<sup>36</sup> No author 1781, *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 3.

Beattie's passage on historic song in which he made the revolutionary ascription of ancient Scottish music to shepherds and milkmaids falls within a similar philosophical debate. Like Kames, Beattie sought rational natural laws to explain human arts, in this case what makes poetry different from other types of composition.<sup>37</sup> Beattie's conjectures on national music follow on from the end of the second section in which he considered the power of music through "accidental association", including the power of national music to awake pleasant associations within the listener.<sup>38</sup> In 'Conjectures on some peculiarities of national music' Beattie uses Scotland as an example to support his thesis that peoples' landscapes and lifestyles affect their ways of thinking, which in turn affects the music they produce. Scotland is seen as "a striking example" because of the difference between music of the Highlands and music of the Lowlands, which Beattie sees as a consequence of the difference between the wild and terrible Highland landscape and the verdant pastoral idyll of the Borders and Lowlands.

The ideas about Scottish music that Franklin and Beattie presented were influential on other writers who wrote more substantially on Scottish music history, despite having been merely presented as examples in wider philosophical work. Historic Scottish music was used as examples by them because of its perceived distinctive nature: its simplicity of harmony and melody, and its distinctive pastorality or wildness. The same features that some writers on the history of manners sought to rehabilitate.

#### **7.4.Pride**

Hume's final reason for the writing of history was that it strengthened virtue. Amongst the virtues of Enlightenment thinkers was the virtue of patriotism. Patriotism was seen as a virtue by thinkers such as Lord Kames because love of one's country for its own sake was the opposite of the vice of self-love, and because patriotism held back the vices of oppression and licentiousness thereby ensuring civil liberties.<sup>39</sup> The majority of writers on Scottish music history in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were not

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<sup>37</sup> Beattie 1776, *Essays*, 350-351.

<sup>38</sup> Beattie 1776, *Essays*, 473-475.

<sup>39</sup> Broadie 2001, *Scottish Enlightenment*, 98.

disinterested commentators on Scottish music history, a sense of pride in the Scottish musical past pervades many of their writings.

The Union of the Parliaments of 1707 looms large in our understanding of eighteenth-century Scotland, but the extent to which Scottish music history was written as a response to the Union remains unclear. Pride in those areas in which pre-Union Scotland was different to England was seen as essential for the proper functioning of Scots within the Union by contemporary commentators, so this may lie behind some of the pride in Scotland's illustrious music history. The impact of the Union should not, however, be overstated: the post-Union political situation is almost never mentioned by writers, and other factors seem also to have been in play. In the case of Ramsay, whose reaction to the Union has been extensively discussed in the secondary literature, post-Union ideological factors may have been tempered by commercial concerns. The Union may have been seen as a destructive event by some in eighteenth-century Scotland, but in Scottish music histories the trials that Scots songs had survived were the decline of feudalism, the Reformation and the modernisation of the countryside; pride in the Scottish musical past may represent pride in weathering these destructive events rather than the Union. The Scottish musical past showed, for some writers, that the Scots had early been civilised peoples, a concern with links to perceptions of the Scots independent of the post-Union political situation.

The ideas about the survival of Scottish musical culture through historic trials, and the importance of the history of song as evidence that the Scots had not always been savages show Scottish music historians' participation in wider contemporary perceptions of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Scotland. Examining the role of pride in the writing Scottish music history shows the role of specifically Scottish concerns in the writing of Scottish music history, working alongside the role of ancient Scots songs as data for the internationally-focussed disciplines of the Scottish Enlightenment.

Examples of pride in the music of the past can be found throughout the period in question. Ramsay's comment that "What further adds to the Esteem we have for them,

is, their Antiquity, and their being universally known" speaks of pride in the songs of the past.<sup>40</sup> Lord Kames opens his comments on the idea that songs were composed by James I with "There is one article however, which regard to my native country will not suffer me to omit. We have in Scotland a multitude of songs tender and pathetic, expressive of love in its varieties..." .<sup>41</sup>

Similarly, Tytler writes towards the beginning of his 1779 essay that "The Scottish musick does no less honour than its poetry, to the genius of the country. The old Scots songs, or melodies, have always been admired, for that wild pathetic sweetness which distinguishes them from the musick of every other country".<sup>42</sup> Tytler does not just present a disinterested view of this excellence in music, his use of possessives such as "our most antient [sic] melodies" show personal identification with the "genius of the country".<sup>43</sup>

Pinkerton describes Scottish pathetic ballads as the best:

The Pathetic is the other principal walk of the Tragic Muse: and in this the Scottish Ballads yield to no compositions whatever. What can be imagined more moving than the catastrophes of Ossian's Darthula, the most pathetic of all poems? or of Hardyknute, Child Maurice, and indeed most of the pieces now collected? Were ever the feelings of a fond mother expressed in language equal in simplicity and pathos to that of Lady Bothwell?<sup>44</sup>

He waxes even more lyrical further down the page writing of 'Hardyknute' that: "The mutilated Fragment of Hardyknute formerly in print, was admired and celebrated by the best critics. As it is now, I am inclined to think, given in it's original perfection, it is certainly the most noble production in this style that ever appeared in the world."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ramsay 1729, *Tea-Table Miscellany, Dublin 1729*, v.

<sup>41</sup> Home 1774, *Sketches*, 166.

<sup>42</sup> Tytler 1779, *Dissertation*, 624.

<sup>43</sup> Tytler 1779, *Dissertation*, 624. Similar phrases permeate Tytler's 'Dissertation'.

<sup>44</sup> Pinkerton 1781, *Scottish Tragic Ballads*, xxxiv-xxxv.

<sup>45</sup> Pinkerton 1781, *Scottish Tragic Ballads*, xxxv. Pinkerton was later forced to admit, after scrutiny from Ritson, that the verses of Hardyknute that he claimed he had had from "the memory of a lady in Lanarkshire" were his own composition, (Pinkerton 1786, *Ancient Scotish Poems, Vol. 1*, cxxxii) and so his

Pinkerton indicates that he sees this excellence in poetry in the past as cause for pride in the present when he writes of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: "It is certainly much to the credit of the united kingdoms that, while the poets of the other countries of Europe were writing extravagant romances, Chaucer, and the princely bards of Scotland, were employed in delineating real life and manners".<sup>46</sup> Ramsay of Ochtertyre, likewise, expresses his pride in the songs of the past by comparing them favourably to songs produced elsewhere: "Some love songs, of which Tibullus himself needed not have been ashamed, might be composed, by an unlettered, uneducated shepherd".<sup>47</sup>

This sense of pride continues in writings produced in the nineteenth century. Scott presents his collection of historic material to the world with the statement:

And trivial as may appear such an offering to the manes of a kingdom once proud and independent I hang it upon her altar with a mixture of feelings which I shall not attempt to describe.

- "Hail! land of spearmen! seed of those who scom'd  
To stoop the proud crest to Imperial Rome!  
Hail! dearest half of Albion, sea-wall'd!  
Hail! state unconquer'd by the fire of war,  
Red war, that twenty ages round thee blaz'd!  
To thee, for whom my purest raptures flow,  
Kneeling with filial homage, I devote  
My life, my strength, my first and latest song."-

*Albania*<sup>48</sup>

The latest writer under consideration in this study, William Dauney, writing in 1838 similarly sees the history of Scottish music as a matter of national pride. In his introductory section Dauney describes the use of the Skene manuscript, of which the body of the book comprises an edition, to show the antiquity and elevate the characters of Scottish melodies as "little short of a national boon". This shows that he thought this

pride in Hardyknute should be read in light of this. His pride in the corpus of ballads as a whole, not just those he had "forged", is however, evident.

<sup>46</sup> Pinkerton 1783, *Select Scottish Ballads*, Vol. 2, xxxiii. Further examples of Pinkerton's pride in Scotland's historic ballads can be found in Pinkerton 1781, *Scottish Tragic Ballads*, xxix, xxxvi; Pinkerton 1783, *Select Scottish Ballads*, Vol. 2, xiii, xvi, xxxiii; and Pinkerton 1786, *Ancient Scottish Poems*, Vol. 1, lxvi, cxxxv.

<sup>47</sup> Runcole [John Ramsay of Ochtertyre] 1791, *On Scottish Songs*, 205.

<sup>48</sup> Scott 1802, *Minstrelsy*, cx.

was something of which the whole country could be proud. Dauney goes on to describes the manuscript itself as “essentially the property of the public”.<sup>49</sup> Considered in conjunction with Dauney’s use of possessives in phrases such as “our native Scottish melodies”<sup>50</sup> and “our ancestors”,<sup>51</sup> Dauney gives the impression that proving the antiquity and good character of Scottish melodies is cause for pride for him and Scots in general. Dauney dedicated *Ancient Scottish Melodies* “To the presidents and members of the Bannatyne and Maitland Clubs”, publishing clubs with patriotic motives, the Bannatyne Club being defended by Walter Scott in the *Quarterly Review*, with the phrase that “We were Scotsmen before we were bibliomaniacs”.<sup>52</sup>

Antiquarian work in eighteenth-century Scotland is often depicted by secondary writers as a response to the Union of 1707, but the level of the impact of the Union on the writing of Scottish music history is difficult to assess. The extent to which the writers discussed above were motivated to express their pride in the Scottish musical past as a result of the Union is not clear, since the Union, or the post-Union relationship between Scotland and England is almost never mentioned. Even in the work of Ramsay, who is often identified as producing work in response to the Union, the influence of his post-Union ideological concerns may have been tempered by other, more commercial concerns.

David Daiches, in his 1964 book *The Paradox of Scottish Culture*, is one of those who characterises antiquarian work as a response to the Union. Daiches characterises James Watson’s 1706 *A Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems both Ancient and Modern* as a patriotic attempt to connect with the achievements of Scotland’s literary past in order to shore up the damage to Scotland’s pride that had been effected by the Union negotiations.<sup>53</sup> Daiches presents Watson’s work as an early example of antiquarianism as a vehicle for national feeling that continued with the work of Ramsay

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<sup>49</sup> Dauney 1838, *Ancient Scottish Melodies*

<sup>50</sup> See for example Dauney 1838, *Ancient Scottish Melodies*, 40.

<sup>51</sup> See for example Dauney 1838, *Ancient Scottish Melodies*, 135.

<sup>52</sup> Ferris 2005, *Printing the Past*, 145-146.

<sup>53</sup> Daiches 1964, *Paradox of Scottish Culture*, 12-13.

and through to the song collectors of the late eighteenth century.<sup>54</sup> In so doing, Daiches presents the effects of the Union on antiquarianism as lasting throughout the eighteenth century. Murray Pittock, in his 1997 book, *Inventing and Resisting Britain*, describes both Ramsay and Scott, thereby covering the whole of the eighteenth century, as "high cultural patriots", resisting the new metropolitan norms brought about by the Union by promoting antiquarian and vernacular culture.<sup>55</sup> In the literature which focusses specifically on song collections, Nelson presents the obsession with the quest for the origins of Scottish culture "inextricably linked to the quest for a strong Scottish identity in the aftermath of union with England" as background to the collections of songs that she examines.<sup>56</sup> The secondary literature on *The Tea-Table Miscellany* in particular tends to present Ramsay's work as a means to preserve a strong Scottish heritage in the post-Union period, Steve Newman, for example, characterising Ramsay's work as "Janus-faced, grounded in cultural memory but also subject to revision and renewal". The historic nature of song was important to this project, but Ramsay's concern for the present and future meant that "his desire to reconcile a Scottish past with a British present required that they not be turned into "relicues" cut off from a world of present song".<sup>57</sup>

Despite the appearance of many of the collections considered in the present study in such accounts, Daiches for example cites the collections of Herd and Thomson,<sup>58</sup> it is difficult to assess the extent of the impact of the Union on the writing of Scottish music history. Accounts such as Newman's description of Ramsay's work in the *Miscellany* as staking a place for Scotland within the new Britain are supported by Ramsay's references to Britain, such as the dedication to "ilka lovely *British* lass";<sup>59</sup> the combination of old and new material in the *Miscellany*; and the marginal position of Ramsay's references to the

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<sup>54</sup> Daiches 1964, *Paradox of Scottish Culture*, 12-35.

<sup>55</sup> Pittock 1997, *Inventing and Resisting Britain*, 32, 115.

<sup>56</sup> Nelson 2003, *Creating a notion of 'Britishness'* vol 1, 24. Nelson cites Dwyer, J. 1998. *The Age of the Passions* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press) on the role of the quest for origins in general.

<sup>57</sup> Newman 2002, *Scots Songs of Allan Ramsay*, 282, 295. Other writers who discuss Ramsay's work and the Union include Smith 1996, *Eighteenth-Century Ideas*, 115-116; Johnson 2003, *Music and Society*, 132-134; Davis 2004, At "Sang About", 190-191; and Gelbart 2007, *The Invention of "Folk" and "Art" Music*, 30.

<sup>58</sup> See Daiches 1964, *Paradox of Scottish Culture*, 31-32, for example.

<sup>59</sup> Ramsay 1724, *Tea-Table Miscellany*, iii. Italics reversed.

historic nature of some of his material, particularly striking given the comparison with his preface to *The Ever Green* (see chapter 3).

These high ideals should, however, be tempered by acknowledging that Ramsay was a canny commercial operator. David Johnson's comment that:

After the Scottish parliament disbanded for the last time in 1707, Edinburgh awoke painfully to the fact that it had become, culturally and politically, a satellite of London. Edinburgh's men of letters looked around, rather desperately, for a new kind of literature which could be essentially Scottish and yet make its mark on the London scene: something that would beat London at its own game,<sup>60</sup>

raises the important point that "Scotch" songs were already a commercially successful genre, and there are aspects of the publication of the *Miscellany* that suggest that Ramsay may have been motivated, at least in part, by commercial concerns: firstly, Ramsay's comments that he wanted his songs to be sung by polite young ladies which, while different from the "downright perfect music" of the Italians, would be pleasing and free from "all Smut and Ribaldry".<sup>61</sup> In so doing Ramsay addresses concerns which were not focussed on the place of Scotland within the Union. Secondly, Ramsay's collaboration with Alexander Stuart on *Musick For Allan Ramsay's Collection of Scots Songs* of 1726. The *Miscellany*, as has been noted, included song texts only. In 1725 the London-based Scot William Thomson published his *Orpheus Caledonius or a Collection of the best Scotch Songs set to Musick by W. Thomson*, which included many of the songs from the *Miscellany* with their tunes. If Ramsay had produced *Musick For Allan Ramsay's Collection of Scots Songs* as a rival publication this would suggest that commercial imperative were in play; if he had been driven simply by his ideology one would expect him to have been content that a fellow Scot had produced a companion volume. Yet the picture is complicated by the difference in format of *Orpheus Caledonius* and *Musick For Allan Ramsay's Collection of Scots Songs*: *Orpheus Caledonius* being a high-quality folio publication with an illustrious list of subscribers, in contrast to the tiny 11x13 centimetre scores of *Musick For Allan Ramsay's Collection of Scots Songs*. Had Ramsay been aiming

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<sup>60</sup> Johnson 2003, *Music and Society*, 132-134.

<sup>61</sup> Ramsay 1729, *Tea-Table Miscellany*, Dublin 1729, v-vi; vii.

at the same market as that of *Orpheus Caledonius* he would seem to have badly misjudged the demands of his audience. It seems likely then that Ramsay was aiming *Musick* at a different, perhaps less affluent, audience. Still, the fact remains that Ramsay saw some reason to publish tunes that three years earlier he had assumed that his audience would know; had he discovered that fewer people knew the tunes than he had anticipated and needed printed music to bring them into the distinctive post-Union Scottish culture he was trying to build? Or had he simply discovered an untapped market to which he could sell? The question remains, and so the commercial imperative also remains a factor for consideration in our understanding of Ramsay's reasons for publishing the *Miscellany*.

Finally, the publication of volume three in 1727 undermines any perception that Ramsay was wholly driven by his ideology regarding the place of post-Union Scotland. The 1723 and 1724 editions are simply entitled *The Tea-Table Miscellany*, yet, as noted above, Ramsay dedicates them to "British Lass[es]" and the texts include a proportion of distinctively Scots elements. From the 1726 editions onwards volumes one and two of the *Miscellany* are subtitled "a collection of Scots sangs". All of these provide support to the idea that Ramsay was at least partly driven by his ideology, as do the four-volume editions published from 1737 onwards, which tend to be entitled *The tea-table miscellany : or, a collection of choice songs, Scots and English*, supporting Newman's argument that Ramsay used the *Miscellany* to try to stake a place for Scotland within the new Britain. When volume three was first published in 1727 it was entitled *The Tea-Table Miscellany: A Collection of Celebrated Songs*. Gone was the emphasis on national origins from the title page, and gone were texts with distinctively Scots elements. If Ramsay had been driven primarily by his ideological concerns here, why did he abandon those elements which emphasised the Scottish origins of the *Miscellany*, and produce a book of songs which bears such a resemblance to contemporary, commercially successful London song books? The place of the Union as a motivating factor in Ramsay's publication of ancient Scottish music must then been seen in the context of the commercial success of the *Miscellany*: Ramsay's aims seem to have been partly ideological and partly commercial.

The only writer who explicitly links his writing on Scottish music history to a sense of the danger of the loss of Scottish cultural identity in the post-Union period is Scott. Scott demonstrates the post-Union pattern of thought described by Broadie as “concentric loyalties”.<sup>62</sup> Scott writes towards the end of his introductory material that:

In the notes and occasional dissertations it has been my object to throw together perhaps without sufficient attention to method a variety of remarks regarding popular superstitions and legendary history which if not now collected must soon have been totally forgotten. By such efforts feeble as they are I may contribute somewhat to the history of my native country the peculiar features of whose manners and character are daily melting and dissolving into those of her sister and ally.<sup>63</sup>

Scott's use of “native country” here is ambiguous, yet he follows this passage with that cited above in which he dedicates his work to the “kingdom”, suggesting he identifies his “native country” as Scotland as a whole. Scott's use of “sister and ally”, however, shows that working for the benefit of Scotland does not preclude a wider acceptance of the Union.

Scott's historiography in *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* is “sterile”, as Kidd puts it, in the sense that although Scott considers it important to record the “popular superstitions and legendary history” he offers no critical evaluation of those superstitions and legends. Earlier writers such as Hume saw the study of history as a moral guard against the dangers of superstition,<sup>64</sup> but Scott's emphasis on superstition and legend as located firmly in the past allows them to function simply as a marker of a distinct culture. This contrasts with those writers, discussed previously, who saw historic Scottish music as a record and embodiment of laudable manners of the past.

Broadie describes the important role of written history in the development of concentric loyalties, arguing that histories such as Robertson's *History of Scotland* (1759) and the work of David Hume would have emphasised to Scottish readers that, although the Union had resulted in a united political system, the contemporary Scottish institutions of the

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<sup>62</sup> Broadie 2001, *Scottish Enlightenment*, 59.

<sup>63</sup> Scott 1802, *Minstrelsy*, cix-cx.

<sup>64</sup> Allan 1993, *Virtue, Learning and the Scottish Enlightenment*, 174 onwards.

Church, law and universities had a distinctive history reaching back to before the Union.<sup>65</sup> Although Kidd has argued that over the course of the eighteenth century challenges to the history of institutions by scholars such as Father Thomas Innes resulted in the weakening or loss of its role in the creation of national identity, the role of history more broadly in national identity is not questioned. Kidd states that by the end of the century the historiography of freedom and ancient institutions, which had been seen as an important factor in Scotland's eighteenth-century constitutional debates, had been replaced by a "sterile historiography of local colour and romance" which could be simply viewed with enjoyment.<sup>66</sup> Yet the writing of Sir John Sinclair in the early nineteenth century shows that Kidd's "sterile historiography" had not been wholly relegated to the position of entertainment. In 1804 Sinclair argued that the historic manners of the Highlands held a particular place in the identity of Scottish Britons and that this identity was essential for Scots to function as proper citizens post-Union:

though the Natives of that formerly independent and hitherto unconquered kingdom, have every reason to be proud of the name of *Britons*, which they have acquired since the Union in 1707, yet, still, they ought not to relinquish, on that account, all remembrance of the Martial Achievements, the Characteristic Dress, or the Language, the Music, or the Customs of their Ancestors. If in all these respects they were to be completely assimilated to the English, Scotland would become in a manner blended with England, whilst its inhabitants, at the same time, could claim no peculiar merit, from old English valour, virtue, literature, or fame; whereas, if they consider themselves not only as *Britons*, but as *Scotchmen*, there are many circumstances, connected with the more remote, and even the modern periods of their history, *which they can recollect with enthusiasm.*<sup>67</sup>

This sense that pride in a distinctive Scottish past, including music, was essential for the functioning of Scots in the post-Union period may then underpin much of the pride expressed by writers of the history of distinctive Scottish music, yet it is only in the work of Scott that the sense of "concentric loyalties" appears in such a clear-cut manner. The absence of references to the Union in the majority of publications, and the role of

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<sup>65</sup> Broadie 2001, *Scottish Enlightenment*, 58-59.

<sup>66</sup> Kidd 1993, *Subverting Scotland's Past*, 210.

<sup>67</sup> Sinclair 1804, *Observations*, 3-4. Sinclair reiterated this opinion in his Sinclair 1813, *Account of the Highland Society of London*, 1.

commercial concerns in Ramsay's work suggest that the role of post-Union pride in writing Scottish music history should not be overstated.

The role of the Union in effecting large-scale social change in Scotland continues to be hotly debated. The large-scale social change of the eighteenth century which appears most frequently in writings on Scottish music history, as shown in chapter 6, is the modernisation of the countryside, rather than the Union. The modernisation of the countryside appeared not only as a narrative element in music-historical writings but was also cited as the impetus to much collection and historical writing. Such change may be obliquely related to the Union, through the economic improvement that some perceived as a direct effect of the Union,<sup>68</sup> yet, once again, this is not explicitly stated in the writings on Scottish music history. As we saw in chapter 6, the eighteenth-century modernisation of the countryside was depicted as the latest in a series of large-scale, and generally destructive, social and cultural changes which had had an effect on the historical progress of Scots songs. The prominence of these events, rather than the Union, in writings on Scottish music history, suggests that pride in a Scottish musical past which had been periodically endangered through a series of historical trials played a greater role in motivating the writing of Scottish music history, than the Union.

The relationship between this sense that Scottish music had weathered great dangers and the pride writers express in the Scottish musical past is suggested by studies of wider antiquarianism. In her 1997 book *Bardic Nationalism* Katie Trumpener argues that the value of physical artefacts for eighteenth-century antiquarians extended beyond the importance of the object itself for an understanding of the past:

The artefact is of value... because of its ability to represent synecdochically the culture and the historical moment that produced it. And because its materiality renders it fragile, the artefact represents not only the traces of a larger cultural world, but also the tragic trials and the triumphant survivals of its history. Made of transient stuff, it survives only brokenly, to serve as a reminder of all that has been effaced or swept away. Yet the fact that it has survived at all is little short of miraculous and suggests the power of culture to

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<sup>68</sup> Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun for example.

endure its vicissitudes with something of itself still intact. Far from evoking disgust, then, the brokenness of the object evokes both tenderness and veneration in the antiquary.<sup>69</sup>

Musical artefacts are presented by writers on Scottish music history as similarly transient and broken: they are presented as corrupted, as we saw in chapter 4, and in need of being “rescued...from oblivion” as McDonald puts it.<sup>70</sup> The perception that musical material had been negatively affected by political and social events which by the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were largely seen in a negative light suggests that Trumpener’s explanation of the importance of physical artefacts holds for musical artefacts too. In short, writers on Scottish music history were proud of the music of the past, in part, because it represented the triumphant survival of their culture as a whole.

In addition, Scottish music history showed, for some writers, that the Highlands had long been civilised, and not the savages that some had suggested. Pride in the civilised past of the Highlands, and Scotland more widely, represented by their ancient song, answered contemporary perceptions of the savagery of the Scots, a concern with links to perceptions of the Scots independent of the post-Union political situation.

Such concerns can be seen in Patrick McDonald’s stated aims for publishing *A Collection of Highland Vocal Airs* in 1784. Patrick McDonald cites a letter sent by his brother, Joseph, to their father, with the manuscript that was to be expanded into *Highland Vocal Airs*, which stated that he had made the collection “in order that those sweet, noble, and expressive sentiments of nature, may not be allowed to sink and dies away: and to shew, that our poor remote corner, even without the advantages of learning and cultivation, abounded in works of taste and genius”.<sup>71</sup> In citing this letter, McDonald demonstrates a desire to use music history to show that contemporary Highlanders were a people with a cultured history, not the savages of common perception. McDonald is not alone in this desire, and neither is it confined to writers on Highland music history. It is, however, in viewing comments on the music history of the Highlands in light of wider eighteenth- and

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<sup>69</sup> Trumpener 1997, *Bardic Nationalism*, 28.

<sup>70</sup> McDonald 1784, *Highland Vocal Airs*, 7.

<sup>71</sup> McDonald 1784, *Highland Vocal Airs*, 1.

early nineteenth-century perceptions of the place of the Highlands in contemporary Scottish society that the desire to present Scotland's cultured past can be seen.

The relationship between the Highlands and Lowlands of Scotland in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was complex and exists in a similarly complex relationship to English perceptions of the roles of Highland and Lowland culture in Scottish culture as a whole.

In the seventeenth century the Lowlands and Highlands had been perceived as divided both linguistically and culturally: the use of Gaelic in the Highlands was seen as culturally isolating, and Highlanders were perceived to be both irreligious and lawless.<sup>72</sup> Despite this, prior to the eighteenth century the Gaelic-speaking Highlands had been central to Scottish national identity: the Scottish nation was perceived to have originated in the Dalriada, a Dark Age west-Highland kingdom; and the Presbyterian church saw its roots in the Celtic church of Columba with its independence from Rome on the questions of the dating of Easter and the tonsure of monks. This central place of the Highlands in national identity came to be challenged in the eighteenth century, as described by Colin Kidd, in his 1994 article 'Gaelic Antiquity and National Identity in Enlightenment Ireland and Scotland'. The challenge came from two quarters: Firstly, in 1729 the Jacobite antiquary Father Thomas Innes challenged the authenticity of the lists of kings which traced the Scottish crown back as early as Fergus MacErch in 330BC. Innes argued that the insertion of the forty kings prior to Fergus II had been motivated by a need to resist Plantagenet threats to Scottish independence in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries by showing the high antiquity of the Scottish crown.<sup>73</sup> Innes' work undermined the traditional view of the long Gaelic origins of the Scottish crown. Secondly, the stadial theory of social development, discussed further in chapter 4, led to the Highlands being regarded, as Kidd puts it, as "an embarrassing anachronism....a primitive people who had more affinity with the other savage communities of the world than with the civilized core of their own nation". He cites the Enlightenment writer William Robertson, who

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<sup>72</sup> Withers 1992, *Creation of the Scottish Highlands*, 144-145.

<sup>73</sup> Kidd 1993, *Subverting Scotland's Past*, 105.

described the Highlands as one of the places in which “society still appears in its rudest form”.<sup>74</sup> Such perceptions were reinforced by the publication of James Macpherson’s Ossianic works.

This is not, however, the whole story: Kenneth McNeil, in his 2007 monograph *Scotland, Britain, Empire: Writing the Highlands, 1760 – 1860* highlights a number of ways in which the Highlands came to have a distinct place within Scottish and imperial British identity, ranging from the use of Highland imagery in Walter Scott’s carefully choreographed entry of George III into Edinburgh, to the depiction of the role of Highland regiments in the Indian Mutiny. McNeil characterises the formation of the Highland Society of London in May 1778 as creating a focal point for those interested in Highland culture, resulting in the bringing of Highland culture to the forefront of Scottish national culture as a whole.<sup>75</sup> McDonald’s publication is dedicated to the Highland Society of London. Other music-historical publications produced under the auspices of the Society can be read in the same light as expressions of pride in a historic culture which was no longer seen as wholly savage and barbarous: Alexander Campbell’s travels to collect material for *Albyn’s Anthology* of 1816 were funded by the Highland Society of London, and Skene produced *The Highlanders of Scotland* of 1837 in response to a competition run by the society.<sup>76</sup>

Kidd notes similar trends in the re-negotiation of the place of the Highlands, but traces their roots to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century empire building: as the disproportionately large role in defending the empire played by Scottish, and particularly Highland, troops became clear, there was an increasing association between the Highlands and patriotism and between the Highlands and the identity of Scotland as a whole.<sup>77</sup> Such ideas can be seen reflected in music-historical terms in the work of Alexander Campbell. In his 1798 publication Campbell presented Highland musical culture as the root of all Scottish musical culture:

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<sup>74</sup> Kidd 1994, *Gaelic Antiquity and National Identity*, 1205-1206.

<sup>75</sup> McNeil 2007, *Scotland, Britain, Empire*, 1.

<sup>76</sup> Skene 1837, *Highlanders of Scotland*, viii-ix.

<sup>77</sup> Kidd 1993, *Subverting Scotland’s Past*, 213.

the nearer a melody approached this scale, so in the same proportion is it to be reckoned the more genuine and ancient; and this remark applies to Highland, as well as Lowland Scotish airs; and as the Lowland melodies are evidently derived from the Highland, and if the examples which I bring to the standard of the *primary scale of music* from the former, illustrate this position; how much more ought such as might be adduced from the latter.<sup>78</sup>

The Highland music histories written by McDonald, Campbell and Skene were produced, then, with pride in the cultured music past of a group that had previously been widely considered as savages.

The rehabilitation of the Highlands into the Scottish national past was by no means universal, however. Amongst some within Scotland there continued to be a perception that Highlanders were savages who had played no part in the origins of modern Scotland. One such thinker was Pinkerton. His views on the racial origins of Scotland are expressed in his 1787 *A Dissertation on the Origin and Progress of the Synthians or Goths* in which he argued that the Picts were a Gothic race rather than a Celtic one, and that it was the Picts, not the Celts who were the roots of the modern Scottish nation. Kidd notes that Pinkerton, and those other historians who shared his “Picto-Gothic” views, saw themselves as patriots: if the Celts and their modern Gaelic ancestors were seen as backwards in terms of social development, emphasising the Pictish origins of the nation was to emphasise Scotland’s early civilisation.

Pinkerton’s denial of a role for the Highlands in Scottish music history in his 1786 publication seems to stem, then, surprisingly, from the same desire to proudly present Scotland as a long civilised nation that had motivated writers on Highland music history such as McDonald. Pinkerton began his 1786 history of Scottish poetry by looking at the histories of different groups inhabiting Scotland in the past, “for to display the extraction

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<sup>78</sup> Campbell 1798, *Introduction to History of Poetry*, 7. It should be noted that Campbell is unusual in his opinions, many writers continued to use “Scottish” as a synonym for “Lowland” or “Border” material, and took little account of the Highlands. A further exception was Ramsay of Ochtertyre, who, whilst he does entitle his letter ‘On Scottish Songs’ does note that he will cover only Lowland material and refers his readers to McDonald’s collection for more information on Highland music - see Runcole [John Ramsay of Ochtertyre] 1791, *On Scottish Songs*, 201.

of a nation is at the same time to shew that of it's [sic] poetry".<sup>79</sup> Although he does consider the origins of the ancient Britons, Picts and Scots, Pinkerton concludes that the greater part of the population of modern Scotland was descended from the Picts, not the Celtic Scots (xl), but also that Scottish poetry is a descendant primarily of Pictish poetry, possibly with some "Gothic" Scandinavian influence (lvii-lx). Pinkerton's comments that "The music of these Pictish, or Scoto-Pictish, songs and ballads, perhaps, presented early specimens of that exquisite expression, and simple melody, now so deservedly admired in Scottish music" (lxvi) not only expresses some pride in historic music, it also presents it as originating amongst a group with no connections to contemporary Highlanders.<sup>80</sup>

McDonald, Campbell, Skene and Pinkerton, despite their differences of opinion on the place of the music history of the Highlands in the music history of Scotland, proudly present their music histories as evidence that the groups whose music they presented were not savages, but peoples with a proud history of "taste and genius".

To summarise, a sense of pride pervades writing on the music history of Scotland throughout the period in question, and seems to have been a major motivating factor for the writing of Scottish music history. The link between such pride and the Union of 1707 should not be overstated: ideological concerns were not the primary motivator even for writers such as Ramsay; those writers who proudly present the songs being sung by their contemporaries as triumphant survivors of a traumatic past tend to refer to earlier destructive events, such as the Reformation, and to the eighteenth-century modernisation of the countryside; and portrayals of the Highland musical past exhibit pride in the evidence such history provides for the perception of the Scots as a people with a long cultured history independent of a consideration of the Union. The concern for the survival of past material through trials and the concern to demonstrate that the Scots

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<sup>79</sup> Pinkerton 1786, *Ancient Scottish Poems*, Vol. 1, xxii. Subsequent references to this publication will appear in parentheses in the main text.

<sup>80</sup> Unfortunately for the Picto-Gothicists, the historical view of Scotland's origins in the Dalriada and the importance of Gaelic Highland culture in later eighteenth-century perceptions of Scottish identity meant that by emphasising the backwardness of Celtic/Gaelic culture they inadvertently emphasised the backwardness of Scotland as a whole in common perception (Kidd 1993, *Subverting Scotland's Past*, 252-253).

were not savages through the writing of music history shows writers on music history participating in ideas and debates which were taking place more widely. The role of pride in the trials that Scottish music had weathered and the role of pride in the long civilised nature of the Highlands show the role of concerns specific to eighteenth-century Scotland in the writing of Scottish music history.

### **7.5. Conclusion**

As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, David Hume identified three advantages of history: amusement, improving understanding and strengthening virtue. This chapter has shown that the study of Scottish music history was undertaken for all three reasons. Many writers on Scottish music history claimed that their writings were merely “curiosities” of no real importance, produced for the amusement of their writers and readers, yet this is belied by their positioning of their writings as part of such important Enlightenment disciplines as the history of manners. Positioning historic song as an indicator and embodiment of the manners of the past, a discipline with the improvement of the human condition at its heart, a number of writers used the relative simplicity, pastorality and naturalness of the musical past to offer a critique of the manners of the present. The perception of the distinctive nature of historic Scottish music, which was often expressed in such terms, resulted in its use as examples in philosophical discussions about the nature and judgement of music and poetry typical of the Enlightenment spirit of enquiry. Comments of this type by Franklin and Beattie went on to become influential in more focussed music-historical writings.

In addition to the utility to the improvement of society and knowledge brought about by the knowledge of the manners of the past, writers wrote from a position of patriotic pride in their musical past: the musical past represented for some a distinctive pre-Union past that they could be proud of; for others, historic music showed that both Lowland and Highland Scots had not been the savages that some perceived them to have been; and for those writers who lamented the destruction of historic material in events such as the Reformation, pride in historic song was pride in a culture which had been through trials and come out fighting.

Between the pride in the musical past, and the use of song to critique the manners of the present, we can see again the combination of specifically Scottish and wider concerns that we have seen in different guises in the preceding chapters. Contemporary concerns about the place of Scotland within the Union and with key events in Scotland's past are expressed through the writing of music history, alongside broader concerns about the problems of modernity in general, and alongside the role of ancient Scots songs as data for the internationally-focussed disciplines of the Scottish Enlightenment.

## 8. Conclusion

Scottish music historians writing in the period between 1720 and 1838 were primarily concerned with the history of a body of Scots songs and ballads that they believed to be ancient. This study has shown that the form of the music history that they created around these songs and ballads was a consequence of the interaction of ideas about the nature of past societies universally with ideas specific to the Scottish context of the history. The purpose of this chapter is to review the main findings of the study with regard to this interaction of the universal and specifically Scottish, present its implications for the study of Scottish music history and the study of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Scotland, and to suggest how these might be built on in future research

### 8.1. The Interaction of the Universal and the Specifically Scottish

Allan Ramsay was the first to claim the antiquity of Scots songs in the 1720s. That he was able to do so appears to have rested on similarities between the features that were already believed to be characteristic of Scots song – its simplicity, pastorality and naturalness – and perceptions of the defining features of the ancient in general. The universal focus of the perceptions of the defining features of the ancient in general that Ramsay tapped into is shown by contemporary discussions of pastoral poetry, a genre with Europe-wide reach.

Ideas about the universal nature of the past continued to underpin claims that Scots songs were ancient into the later eighteenth century. Ramsay's work was viewed with some criticism in the later part of the century, but the features that he had claimed were characteristic of ancient song continued to underpin claims for the antiquity of song: simplicity, pastorality and naturalness were seen as features of all early societies in the prevailing Enlightenment model of historical progress. The model stated that all societies progressed from simple and pastoral forms to complex, commercial forms as they developed.

It was not only in supporting the claims that Scots songs were ancient that this universal model of historical progress underpinned the writing of music history; adherence to the model resulted in some of the narrative elements of Scottish music history. Since the model predicted historical progress would be from simple to complex, writers such as Tytler were able to place songs into a chronological sequence based on their perceived level of musical complexity. Some Scots songs appeared to writers to be too complex to be attributed to the earliest stages of society, but since they believed that songs were ancient, they attributed this over-complexity to a gradual process of corruption over time. This narrative sprung from a problem with accommodating songs to the model, but was itself supported by the model: as society became more complex so their songs became more complex.

This is not the whole picture of Scottish music history, however. Ideas specific to the Scottish context of the work interacted with the universal ideas in a variety of ways: by working to reinforce parts of the history based on universal ideas; by underpinning the way in which parts of the model were embedded in the specific Scottish context; and by explaining apparent challenges to the history of Scottish music built on the universal model.

Ramsay's claims that the defining features of ancient Scots songs were their simplicity, pastorality and naturalness were reinforced by the comparison he drew with Italian music in his preface, and by the comparison he drew by placing "old" texts with a high density of Scots elements alongside the more neo-classical English-focussed new texts. There was a history in Scotland of perceiving Italian culture as the most modern and refined, and, likewise, with regard to the contrasting texts, Scots was perceived as an older, more natural language than English. These contemporary perceptions, specific to the Scottish context, reinforce both the defining features of Scots songs and their links with its antiquity drawn from ideas about the universal nature of the past.

The universal model of historical development allowed different societies to develop through the different stages at different rates. In Scotland, the Highlands were seen as an

example of a society which remained in an early stage of its development, in contrast to the civilised commercial society of metropolitan Edinburgh, for example. The rural poor of the Lowlands seem similarly to have been perceived as maintaining an early state of society, although not as early as that of the Highlanders. This application of the model to the Scottish context had an impact on a range of aspects of the writing of Scottish music history: further purportedly ancient songs and ballads were collected from Highlanders and the rural poor of the Lowlands and Borders; those writers who believed that their predecessors had gradually corrupted Scots songs as they had advanced towards civilisation presented a narrative in which this corruption was paralleled by an uncorrupted tradition of preservation amongst the rural poor which had been brought to the attention of civilised society by a few key individuals, such as Allan Ramsay; sources that were not songs were used to create a narrative of gradual musical change over time amongst the Lowland and Border rural poor, in contrast to the depiction of musical stasis amongst the Highlanders.

Orality was seen as a universal feature of the early societies in the model, with literacy perceived as a later development. Motherwell and Dauney used oral sources to illustrate the ancient music preserved by the Lowland and Border rural poor, one of the Scottish groups perceived to maintain an early state of society. In contrast, they used written sources to illustrate the music history of the predecessors of their contemporary metropolitan elite, a group seen to have been advancing towards the later, literate stages of society. Joseph Ritson interpreted this aspect of the universal model of historical progress differently, examining Scottish history to discover the point at which he believed society had become literate and presenting his music history as a narrative of dateable written sources from that point onwards. In these aspects of Scottish music histories which rely on perceptions of the early stages of development of contemporary Highlanders and the Lowland and Border rural poor and on perceptions of the point at which different groups became literate, then, we can see the impact of the application of the universal model in the specifically Scottish context on the writing of Scottish music history.

The lack of other forms of evidence for the antiquity of Scots songs despite their characteristic ancient features presented a potential challenge to the claims for the antiquity of song built on the universal model of historical progress. Bringing specifically Scottish historical destructive events into the narrative of Scottish music history solved these problems with accommodating Scots songs within the master narrative of universal historical development. Reference to the social and cultural changes wrought by the decline of feudalism, the Reformation and turbulent seventeenth century, and the eighteenth-century modernisation of the countryside could account for the lack of historic manuscript evidence of the songs, the decline of the bards, and the fragmentary nature of the songs preserved by the rural poor, allowing the continued perception that songs were ancient because they exhibited the characteristic features of early societies, and would have been preserved largely unchanged amongst groups who maintained early stages of society had it not been for the imposition of these specifically Scottish historical events.

The reasons for writing Scottish music history, like the shape that history took, stem not only from a concern for the study of mankind in general, but from the specifically Scottish circumstances of a post-Union society which had been through many historical trials. The contemporary idea that Highlanders were savages was underpinned by the prevailing model of historical thought which shaped so much of the writing of Scottish music history. Yet, for many writers, that music history was vital to prove that Scotland was a nation with a long cultured past. In these ways, Scottish music history was shaped by perceptions of the specifically Scottish historical circumstances of its composition and preservation.

Given writers' level of pride in ancient Scottish "national" music the widespread impact of the master narrative of universal historical development – to the extent that specifically Scottish historical events often seem to appear in order to make songs fit into the universal model more neatly – may perhaps seem surprising. The pervasiveness of the master narrative of universal historical development, however, underlines the international vision of the Scottish Enlightenment: men of the international Republic of

Letters concerned with the science of the whole of mankind. Writers may have felt that Scottish music history was conducive to national pride, but there was nothing parochial in their outlook. Eighteenth-century Scottish antiquarianism may have been partially kick-started by the Union of 1707, but the impact of the idea of a global history of societal development on Scottish music history belies any perception that that writing music history was solely, or even primarily, an exercise in sentimental navel-gazing as a reaction to losing its parliament and cultural identity to a more dominant neighbour. The investigation of Scottish music history drew on the most up to date European historical thought, and in the work of writers such as Kames and Beattie, provided data for some of the foremost disciplines of the Enlightenment.

## **8.2.Further Implications**

In addition to the main findings, outlined above, this study also has further, broader, implications. The questions that this thesis raises about the construction of elements of the received view of the early music of Scotland suggests that it is time to reconsider the sources available outwith the confines of these particular culturally constructed narratives. In chapter 1 the parallels between the work of Farmer and the work of Dauney two centuries earlier were outlined. Many of the features of Dauney's work that were paralleled in Farmer's reflect the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century ways of thinking about the past that have been outlined in this study. By calling attention to the historically contingent nature of these aspects – the assumption that scant sources imply unchanging practice over long time periods, the comparisons drawn between Scottish musical “development” and that of an undefined universal standard, and the drawing of analogies over wide time periods and geographical regions – this study should prompt questions about their continued influence in shaping the received view. The sources for the music history of Scotland could, then, be considered as particular cases with their own stories to tell rather than indicators of general success, or lack of success, in some externally defined rate of cultural progress. The extent to which we can know anything of the music of the lower orders of society could be re-examined. It would be disingenuous, given the historiographical nature of this study, to claim that such an approach would be objectively more “correct” than that taken by Dauney or Farmer. Rather, what can be

claimed for such an approach is that it would bring the study of Scottish music history more into line with twenty-first-century ideas about the writing of history. Such an approach is long overdue.

This research focussed on the period up until 1838 because of the parallels between the work of Dauney and the work of Farmer. The writing of Scottish music history did not stop in the intervening century, however. An examination of the writing of Scottish music history between 1838 and 1947 might shed further light on the creation of our present-day received view. One of the major differences between Dauney's and Farmer's writing is that Dauney's work is focussed on illuminating the history of song, whereas Farmer uses similar source materials to write the history of Scottish music more broadly. In focussing on song Dauney continues a tradition of scholarship which had run throughout the eighteenth and into the nineteenth centuries. It has been suggested in this thesis that the focus on song arose due to a combination of factors: because Scots songs were seen as distinctively Scottish; because the features seen as characteristic of Scots songs in the seventeenth century matched the features seen as characteristic of ancient societies in contemporary thought; and because songs fitted neatly into perceptions of the past which saw all music beginning as song. A study of the period between 1838 and 1947 might show the point at which the focus on song is removed, throwing further light on how the modern received view came into being.

This research has shown that the study of the creation of Scottish music history in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is a topic deserving of attention in its own right. This study focussed primarily on ideas about the history of music which appeared in published books, with the exception of Ramsay of Ochtertyre's article in *The Bee*. The period under consideration saw the burgeoning of the periodical press, but time constraints prevented an examination of periodicals. Such an examination would add further richness to the picture of the creation of Scottish music history. By focussing on published books this study has dealt with ideas that were firmly in the public domain through the medium of printing; a further advantage of the examination of ideas which

appeared in periodicals is that it would help to clarify how widespread these ideas became in the public sphere.

Examination of the unpublished writings and private correspondence of many of these writers might help to further illuminate their ideas about the history of Scottish music. Skene's 1837 publication *The Highlanders of Scotland*, for example, makes only passing reference to depictions of musical instruments on sculpture.<sup>1</sup> The manuscript text which Skene submitted to the Highland Society of London, on the other hand, includes labelled drawings of the sculptures. The presence of such pictures and the additional detail that they convey changes the focus of the passage in question in the manuscript version, making it seem more important to the writer than the same passage in the published version. A further example is the correspondence between Cromeck and Allan Cunningham regarding the songs included in *Remains of Nithsdale and Galloway Song*. In the correspondence between Cromeck and Cunningham that was later included in the 1847 publication *Poems and Songs by Allan Cunningham*, Cromeck objects to the use of a particular word in a song, arguing that "The epithet 'Fell' is a word almost exclusively used by *mere* cold-blooded *classic* poets, not by the poets of Nature, and it certainly has crept into the present song through the ignorance of reciters. We *must* remove it, and its removal must *not* be mentioned".<sup>2</sup> This example provides further and perhaps more conclusive evidence of the fitting of evidence into a preconceived framework of historical song. An examination of unpublished material generated by these writers in relation to the history of music in Scotland might also add to our knowledge of their methodological approach and concerns.

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<sup>1</sup> Skene 1837, *Highlanders of Scotland*, 217-218.

<sup>2</sup> Cited in Read 1987, *A Case of Literary Duplicity*, 177.

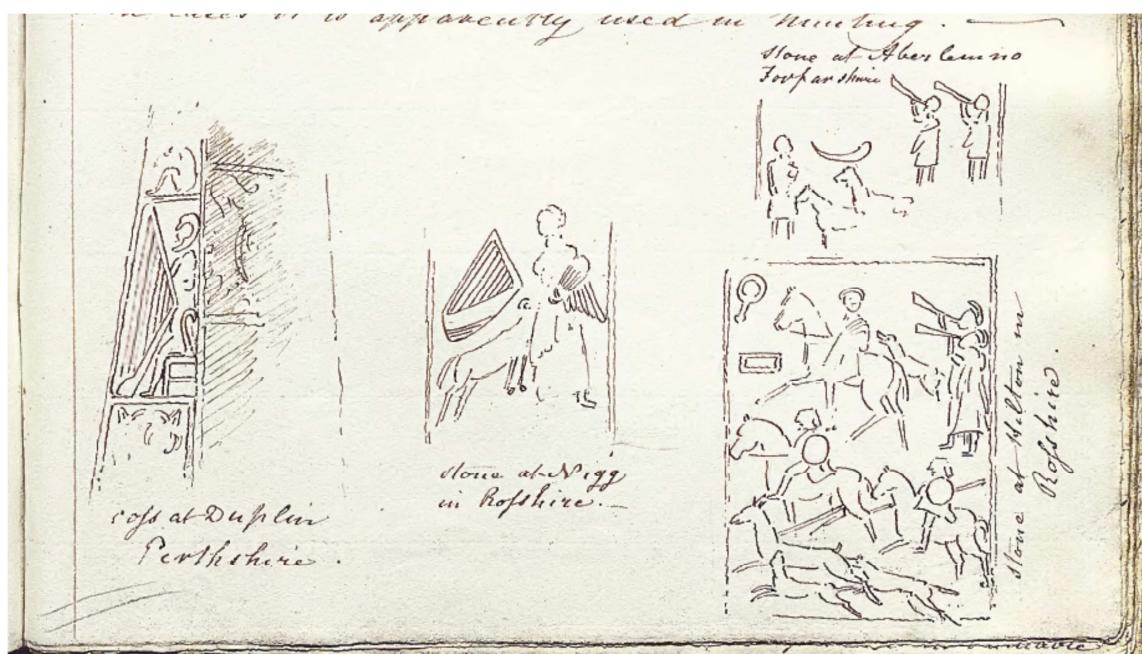


Figure 2 – Labelled drawings of harps and pipes on sculptured stones from Skene's 1834 manuscript *Gael Albanich* which was later revised to form *The Highlanders of Scotland*.<sup>3</sup> © Reproduced courtesy of the Highland Society of London.

It was not simply in antiquarian editions that the historic nature of the material was noted and considered, many performing editions also noted the historic nature of the material. This focus has largely been overlooked in studies of such collections and Scottish song culture, but has implications for our understanding of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Scottish musical life: young ladies singing songs around their tea tables, or at the harpsichord were not simply singing national songs with pride and for their exotic qualities, they were singing material believed to have been sung since the early stages of Scotland's history. Members of the Edinburgh Musical Society performing songs with the great Tenducci or the sonatas on Scots songs by James Oswald were performing material seen to have historic roots. The lower orders were purchasing songs which appeared in historic collections in the cheaper formats of broadsides and chapbooks.

This study has shown an interest in the historic nature of song amongst a group of well-educated, male, metropolitan writers. It seems reasonable to assume that those who

<sup>3</sup> Skene 1834, *Gael Albanich*, fol. 160<sup>r</sup>.

purchased the collections and writings from the antiquarian end of the spectrum had at least a passing interest in the purportedly historic nature of the song. The level of engagement with the historic aspect of song of those who brought and used performing editions is currently unknown. Many performing editions simply mention the historic nature of their contents in passing, those which include “ancient and modern” material often not even differentiating between the two in the body of the work. There are also a substantial number of publications which do not mention the potentially historic nature of their contents at all.

The purportedly historic nature of material which was being regularly performed adds an extra dimension to the question of what it meant to be singing this material. Was the historic nature of the material part of the attraction for singers? Nelson’s 2000 article examines the varying performance practices of this material, charting a broad trend from the perception that simple performance of songs was the correct ancient performance practice to the enthusiasm for the modern European arrangements of Corri, Napier and Urbani. Nelson argues that by the late eighteenth century the proponents of the more simple style had largely “conceded defeat”, yet Thomson’s correspondence with Kozeluch suggests that some level of simplicity continued to be important to collection publishers and users.<sup>4</sup> The popularity of the arrangements by composers such as Corri provides no indicator that the purportedly historic nature of the material was important to users. The appearance of Thomson’s 1822 writing on the historic nature of Scottish music in a collection aimed at the domestic music-making of young ladies, however, suggests a belief in a market with some level of engagement with the purportedly historic nature of the material.

Were singers attracted by a nostalgic glimpse of a disappearing rural way of life as suggested by David Johnson,<sup>5</sup> or do the perceived roots of such song much further back in time challenge Johnson’s interpretation? If the historic nature was part of the attraction for singers what did they feel they were doing in recreating historic material? Were they

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<sup>4</sup> Nelson 2000, *Tea-Table Miscellanies*, 607, 609, 615.

<sup>5</sup> Johnson 2003, *Music and Society*, 144.

resisting the Union, the corruption of modernity, or simply indulging in the virtue of curiosity? What exactly did Lord Alva and his family aim to communicate by the inclusion of the song ‘Where Helen Lies’ in the painting of their domestic family group?

This thesis has highlighted the importance of writing about the history of song in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Scotland. In so doing it raises the possibility that the historic nature of song should be considered in explorations of the song culture of Scotland in this period. To properly evaluate this, however, further research along the lines suggested above is necessary.

This study began with a collection of writings on Scottish music history and then looked at wider intellectual thought in order to understand why music history had assumed the shape it had. This was a necessary methodological approach but it is important to emphasise that such an approach does not imply a one way traffic of influence from wider thought to music history. The present study, then, reflects back upon the wider culture, by showing how wider patterns of thought manifested themselves in a music-historical context. For example, Ramsay’s work in the *Miscellany* provides evidence of the importance of pastorality, simplicity and naturalness as distinguishing features of the ancient, as well as further examples of perceptions of Italian music and Scots language. The pervasive nature of the model of universal societal development from simple and pastoral to complex and commercial in Scottish music history, discussed in chapter 4, provides further evidence of the importance of this model in contemporary thought. The way in which historic events were used to explain the lack of evidence of Scots songs in the past adds to the bank of evidence of eighteenth-century perceptions of these events. The desire to demonstrate that the Highlands had a civilised musical past provides further data for late-eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century perceptions of the Highlands. Through examples such as these, this study stakes a place for Scottish music history in the wider cultural study of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The presence of writings on music by key Enlightenment thinkers such as Lord Kames and James Beattie adds weight to the idea that music history should not simply be considered as an

interesting addition to the field, but as an integral indicator of the historical thought of the time.

This study of musical historical thought has thrown up some perceptions which do not seem to have been indicated by previously studied areas. In particular, a large proportion of the writings studied in this exploration of the writing of music history suggest a perception of rural Lowland and Border society which does not appear to have been covered in the present-day literature. Eighteenth-century perceptions of the Highlands as a society in an arrested state of development have been extensively studied. Writings about the collection of historic song from the Lowlands and Borders suggest a similar perception for these areas.

The implications of the Ossian controversy for the perceived value of oral versus literate sources have been extensively discussed in the secondary literature. Like the example above, this study of musical historical thought shows that this debate was not simply focussed on Gaelic material and on those writers whose work can be seen to have a direct relationship to Macpherson's. The relative value of oral and literate sources was being negotiated in the body of work on Lowland and Border material as well. In these ways this study of music history adds new aspects to the overall picture of historical thought.

This study not only has implications for the study of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century perceptions of the past: many of the ways in which writers on music history characterise the past and its music are comparative, and so also reveal perceptions of the present. Describing a defining characteristic of the past as "simplicity" for example implies that the present is not simple. The ways in which writers took pride in the simple, natural and pastoral music of the past, seeing it as a contrast to modern, refined music shows a concern about the potentially pernicious effects of over refinement in civilised societies occurring in eighteenth-century metropolitan Scotland. Eighteenth-century concerns about the potential down sides of contemporary society are illustrated by writers' concerns about the on-going loss of ancient songs and ballads as a consequence of the historical development of the rural poor, discussed in chapter 6.

The Highland Society of London was involved in a number of publications which formed the sources for this study, yet modern scholarship on the society appears to be lacking. The only modern account of the society is Alexander Campbell's 1983 book *Two Hundred Years: The Highland Society of London*, a brief history of the society which draws heavily on Sir John Sinclair's 1813, *Account of the Highland Society of London*. A more extensive study of the society placing its work in its cultural context is lacking, yet the extensive records of the society kept in the National Library of Scotland suggest that such a study would be possible.

The results of this study, then, have implications for the further study of the creation of early Scottish music history, for the study of that early music history itself, for our understanding of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Scottish musical culture, and for our understanding of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century historical thought and perceptions of their own time.

## Appendix 1: Chronological List of Other Works Examined in Which the Idea that Scottish Music Had a Past Appeared

Thomson, W. 1726. *Orpheus Caledonius or a Collection of the best Scotch Songs set to Musick by W. Thomson* (London: Engraved and Printed for the Author at his house in Leicester Fields)

Watts, J. 1731. *The musical miscellany; being a collection of choice songs, set to the violin and flute, by the most eminent masters* (London: Printed by and for John Watts)

Barsanti, F. 1742. *A Collection of Old Scots Tunes: With a Bass for Violoncello or Harpsichord: Set and Most Humbly Dedicated to the Right Honourable The Lady Erskine* (Edinburgh: Printed by Alexander Baillie, & sold by Messrs Hamilton & Kincaid)

Oswald, J. 1743. *A Second Collection of Curious Scots Tunes for a Violin and German Flute with a Through Bass for the Harpsichord by Mr James Oswald* (London: Printed for and sold by Jno. Simpson)

Geminiani, F. 1749. *A Treatise of Good Taste in the Art of Music Dedicated to His Royal Highness Frederick Prince of Wales* (London)

Yair, J. 1749. *The Charmer; a choice collection of songs, English and Scots.* (Edinburgh: Printed for J. Yair)

Yair, J. 1752. *The Charmer; a choice collection of songs, English and Scots.* (Edinburgh: Printed for J. Yair)

Blair, H. 1765. *A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian, the Son of Fingal. The Second Edition. To Which is Added, an Appendix, Containing a Variety of Undoubted Testimonies Establishing their Authenticity. By Hugh Blair, D. D. One of the Ministers of the High Church, and Professor of Rhetorick and Belles-Lettres, in the University of*

*Edinburgh.* (London: printed for T. Becket and P. A. De Hondt, at Tully's Head, near Surry Street in the Strand)

Percy, T. 1765. *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry: Consisting of Old heroic Ballads, Songs, and other pieces of our earlier Poets, (chiefly of the lyric kind.) Together with some few of later date.* (London: Printed for J. Dodsley in Pall-Mall)

Gregory, J. 1766. *A Comparative View of the State and Faculties of Man with those of the Animal World* (London: Printed for J. Dodsley)

Hailes. 1770. *A Collection of Ancient Scottish Poems, from the Manuscript of George Bannatyne 1568* (Edinburgh: Printed by A. Murray and J. Cochran, for John Balfour)

Henry, R. 1771. *The history of Great Britain, from the first invasion of it by the Romans Under Julius Caesar. Written on a New Plan. By Robert Henry, D. D. One of the Ministers of Edinburgh* (London: Printed for the author, and sold by T. Cadell)

No author. 1776. *The Nightingale: A Collection of Ancient and Modern Songs, Scots and English; None of Which are in Ramsay: And a Variety of Favourite Songs and Catches, Which Never Appeared in Any Collection. With Toasts and Sentiments. To Which is Added, The Edinburgh Buck: An Epilogue Written by Mr. R. Fergusson.* (Edinburgh: W. Darling)

No author. 1778. *The scots nightingale: or, Edinburgh vocal miscellany. A new and select collection of the best Scots and English songs; With The Most Favourite Cantatas, Duets, And Catches, Now In Vogue: and a great number of valuable originals, by Drs. Beattie, Goldsmith, Blacklock, Scrymgeour, Innes; Sir Harry Erskine; Mess. Aiken, Hamilton, Fergusson, Gilson, Watt, Neil, Ding; and several other Gentlemen in Edinburgh, glasgow, and Dumfries. To Which IS Added, Toasts, Sentiments, and Hob-Nobs; Many of them never before published. Collected by James Murray; with the friendly assistance of the first-rate musicians in Edinburgh* (Edinburgh: printed by, and for, James Murray)

Murray, J. 1779. *The Scots nightingale: or, Edinburgh vocal miscellany. A new and select collection of the best Scots and English songs ; and a great number of valuable originals, by Drs. Beattie, Goldsmith, ...* (Edinburgh: Printed by James Murray)

Smith, J. 1780. *Gallic Antiquities: Consisting of A History of the Druids, particularly those of Caledonia; a Dissertation on the Authenticity of the Poems of Ossian; and A Collection of Ancient Poems, Translated from the Gallic of Ullin, Ossian, Orran, &c. By John Smith, Minister at Kilbrandon, Argyllshire* (Edinburgh: T.Cadell)

Phorson, W. 1781. *The union song-book: or, vocal miscellany. Being a choice collection of the most celebrated Scots and English songs. Likewise a Variety of Favourite Airs And Catches. To which is added, toasts, sentiments, and hob-nobs, &c. &c. &c.* (Berwick: Printed by and for W. Phorson; B. Law, Ave-Mary Lane, and John Brown, NO. 45. Cheapside, London)

Callander, J. 1782. *Two ancient Scottish poems; the Gaberlunzie-man and Christ's kirk on the green with notes and observations, by John Callander, Esq. of Craigforth* (Edinburgh: J. Robertson)

No author. 1782. *The Gold-Finch, or New modern Songster. The Second Edition* (Edinburgh: A. Brown)

No author. 1785. *The Goldfinch, or New Modern Songster. Being a Select Collection of the most admired and favourite Scots and English Songs, Cantatas &c.* (Glasgow: Printed by J. & M. Robertson, Saltmarket)

Brown, J. 1786. *The musical miscellany: a select collection of Scots, English and Irish songs, set to music* (Perth: Printed by J. Brown)

Johnson, J. 1787. *The Scots Musical Museum. Humbly Dedicated to the Catch Club Instituted at Edinr., June 1771* (Edinburgh: N. Stewart, R. Bremner, Corri and Sutherland)

Napier, W. 1789. *Music. Proposals for publishing by subscription, a complete collection of the pastoral music of Scotland, Dedicated BY Permission To Her Grace the Duchess of Gordon. To which will be prefixed a dissertation on the Scottish music, with historical and critical observations on its genius and antiquity. Subscriptions are received b the publisher, W. Napier, in the Strand; by Mr. Nicol, Bookseller to His Majesty, in Pall-Mall; by Mr. Murray, in Fleet Street; and by Mr. Sibbald, and Messrs Corri and Sutherland, Edinburgh* (London: W. Napier)

No author. 1790. *A select collection of favourite Scottish ballads, with copperplates* (Perth: R. Morison junior)

No author. 1790. *Morison's select collection of celebrated Scotish ballads*

Eastcott, R. 1793. *Sketches of the origin, progress and effects of music, with an Account of the Ancient Bards and Minstrels. Illustrated with Various Historical Facts, Interesting Anecdotes, & Poetical Quotations. By the Rev. Richard Eastcott, Of Exeter* (Bath: Bath : printed and sold by S. Hazard; sold likewise by Messrs. G. G. J. & J. Robinson, Paternoster-Row; Cadell, Strand, Dilly, Poultry, and Verner and Hood, Birch Lane, London; Messrs. Trewman, Woolmer, Sweetland, Grigg, Penny, Manning, and Hedgeland, Exeter; Mr. Collins, Salisbury; Mr. Hayden, and Richardson, Plymouth; and all other Booksellers.)

Watlen, J. 1793. *Watlens Collection of the most admired Scots Songs both ancient & modern, selected from the best Authors ... Set for the voice, piano forte, flute or guitar.* no. 1-9. (Edinburgh)

MacPherson, J. 1795. *Morison's Edition of the Poems of Ossian, the Son of Fingal....with a Sett [sic] of Elegant Engravings....* (Perth: Printed by R. Morison Junior, for R. Morison and Song, Booksellers)

Sinclair, J. 1804. *Observations on the Propriety of Preserving the Dress, the Language, the Poetry, the Music and the Customs of the Ancient Inhabitants of Scotland* (London: Printed by W. Bulmer and Co. Cleveland-Row)

Whyte, W. and J. Haydn. 1804. *A Collection of Scottish Airs, harmonized for the Voice and Piano Forte, with introductory and concluding Symphonies and Accompaniments for a Violin and Violoncello, by Joseph Haydn Mus Doct.* (Edinburgh: William Whyte)

Elouis, J. 1807. *Second Volume of a Selection of favourite Scots Songs with Accompaniments for the Harp or Pianoforte which may be performed on these Instruments either with the Voice or without it as Familiar Lessons to which are added Several Airs with Variations Composed and Respectfully Dedicated by Permission to the Right Honorable The Earl of Eglinton* (London R Birchall, Dublin Messrs. Goulding, Edinburgh Messrs Muir Wood and Co.)

Cromek, R. H. 1810. *Select Scotish Songs, Ancient and Modern; with Critical Observations and Biographical Notices, by Robert Burns* (London: Printed for T. Cadell and W. Davies, Strand)

Gilchrist, J. B. 1814. *A collection of Scottish ballads, tales, and songs, ancient and modern: with explanatory notes and observations* (Leith: Gilchrist and Heriot)

Hogg, J. 1819. *No. of the Border Garland. Containing Nine New Songs. By James Hogg. The Music Partly Old Partly Composed by Himself and friends. & Arranged with Symphonies and Accompaniments for the Piano Forte* (Edinburgh: Engraved for the Editor by Walker & Anderson, & sold by Nathaniel Gow and Son)

Davie, J. 1825. *The Caledonian Repository* (Aberdeen)

Lyle, T. 1827. *Ancient ballads and songs, chiefly from tradition, manuscripts and scarce work : with biographical and illustrative notices, including original poetry* (London)

Stenhouse, W. and D. Laing. 1853. *Illustrations of the Lyric Poetry and Music of Scotland. By the Late William Stenhouse. Originally Compiled to Accompany the "Scots Musical Museum," and now Published Separately, with Additional Notes and Illustrations* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons)

## Appendix 2: Text of 'Scornfu' Nansy'

NANSY'S to the *Green Wood* gane,  
 To hear the *Gowdspink* chattering,  
 And *Willie* he has followed her,  
 To gain her Love by flat'ring:  
 But a' that he cou'd say or do,  
 She geck'd and scorned at him,  
 And ay when he began to woo,  
 She bad him mind wha gat him.

WHAT ails ye at my Dad, quoth he,  
 My Minny or my Aunty,  
 With Crowdie Mowdy they fed me,  
 Lang-Kail and Ranty Taunty:  
 With Bannocks of good Barly Meal,  
 Of thae there was right Plenty,  
 With chapped Stocks fou butter'd well,  
 And was not that right dainty.

ALTHO my Father was nae Laird,  
 'Tis Daffin to be vaunty,  
 He keepit ay a good Kail-yard,  
 A Ha'House and a Pantrie:  
 A good blew Bonnet on his Head,  
 An Owrlay 'bout his Cragy,  
 And ay untill the Day he died,  
 He rade on good Shanks Nagy.

NOW Wae and Wander on your Snow,  
 Wad ye had beny *Nansy*,  
 Wad ye compare ye'r sell to me,  
 A Docken till a Tansie?  
 I have a Wooer of my ain,  
 They ca' him souple *Sandy*,  
 And well I wat his bony Mou  
 Is sweet like Sugar-Candy.

WOW *Nansy*, What needs a' this Din?  
 Do I not ken this *Sandy*?  
 I'm sure the Chief of a' his Kin  
 Was *Rab* the Beggar Randy:  
 His Minny Meg upo' her Back  
 Bare baith him and his Billy;

Will ye compare a nasty Pack  
To me your winsome *Willy*?

MY Gutcher left a good braid Sword,  
Tho it be auld and rusty,  
Yet ye may tak it on my Word,  
It is baith stout and trusty;  
And if I can but get it drawn,  
Which will be right uneasy,  
I shall lay baith my Lugs in Pawn,  
That he shall get a Heezy,

THEN *Nansy* turn'd her round about,  
And said, did *Sandy* hear ye,  
Ye wadna miss to get a Clout,  
I ken he disna fear ye:  
Sae had ye'r Tonge and say nae mair,  
Set somewhere else your Fancy;  
For as lang's *Sandy's* to the fare  
Ye never shall get *Nansy*.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ramsay 1724, *Tea-Table Miscellany*, 37-39.

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